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1999

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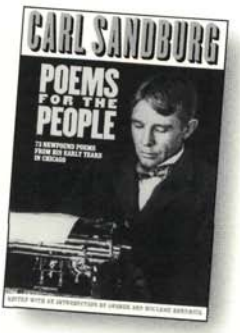

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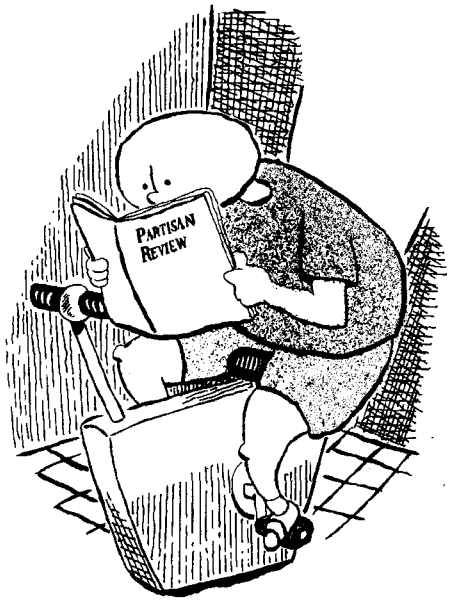

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Editor's note: In the Fall issue of 1998, we should have noted that both George Konrád's "Aphorisms" and Norman Manea's "The Jewish Writer in the Public Arena" were originally papers presented at "Writing the Jewish Future: A Global Conversation," a conference sponsored by the National Foundation for Jewish Culture.

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CONTRIBUTORS

DENIS DONOGHUE's most recent book is *The Practice of Reading* (Yale University Press). . . .*Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* by **JEFFREY HERF** received the American Historical Association's George Lewis Beer Prize. . . .Farrar, Straus & Giroux will soon publish *A Hooligan's Return* by **NORMAN MANEA**. . . .**SUSAN BERNOFSKY**'s translation of Robert Walser's novel *The Robber* is forthcoming from Nebraska University Press. . . .Riverhead published **LEONARD MICHAELS**'s latest book, *Time Out of Mind*. . . .**WALTER LAQUEUR** is the author of numerous books, including *Fascism: Past, Present, Future* (Oxford University Press). . . . **MILLICENT BELL** edited *The Cambridge Companion to Edith Wharton*. . . .**H. J. KAPLAN**, a contributor to *Partisan Review* since 1939, lives in Toulouse, France. . . .**SANFORD PINSKER** is editing an anthology of American humor. . . .**PETER FILKINS** teaches at Simon's Rock College of Bard and is the author of *What She Knew*, a book of poetry from Orchises (1998). . . .**W. S. MERWIN** has written many books of poetry, the most recent of which are *The Folding Cliffs* (1998) and *The River Sound* (1999). . . .Retired librarian **EDWARD LOCKE**'s poems have appeared in many magazines and anthologies, including *What Rough Beast* (Ashland Poetry Press). . . .**JAMES HATCH** is a doctoral student in English at CUNY's Graduate Center. . . .**EDWIN M. ZIMMERMAN** resides in Washington, D.C. . . .Grove will publish **JACQUELINE OSHEROW**'s *Dead Men's Praise* this fall. . . .**SHARONA BEN-TOV,** winner of a 1998 Hodder Fellowship at Princeton, directs the Creative Writing Program at Bowling Green State University. . . .**ANNE ATIK** is a poet, translator and lecturer. . . .**PEG BOYERS** is the executive editor of *Salmagundi*. . . .Noted poet and translator **DAVID FERRY**'s *The Odes of Horace* was published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux in 1997. . . .**ALFRED LICHTENSTEIN**, primarily an Expressionist poet, was killed in World War I at the age of twenty-five. . . .Professor of English at Boston University, **ROBERT LEVINE**'s most recent translation is of *The Deeds of God through the Franks*. . . .**SHELDON GILMAN** is Preceptor in German of Boston University's Foreign Languages and Literature Department. . . .**KAREN WILKIN**'s *Cézanne* is available from Abbeville Press. . . .**EUGENE GOODHEART** is Edytha Macy Gross Professor of Humanities at Brandeis University and author of *The Reign of Ideology* (Columbia University Press). . . .**PETER W. WOOD** serves as Associate Provost, Associate Professor of Anthropology, and President's Chief of Staff at Boston University. . . .Professor Emeritus of Neurobiology at University of California at Berkeley, **GUNTHER STENT**'s latest book is *Nazis, Women and Molecular Biology* (Briones Books). . . .**EDITH KURZWEIL** has written and edited many books, including, most recently, *A Partisan Century*. . . . **LARRY LOCKRIDGE** is Professor of English at New York University and author of *The Ethics of Romanticism* (Cambridge University Press).

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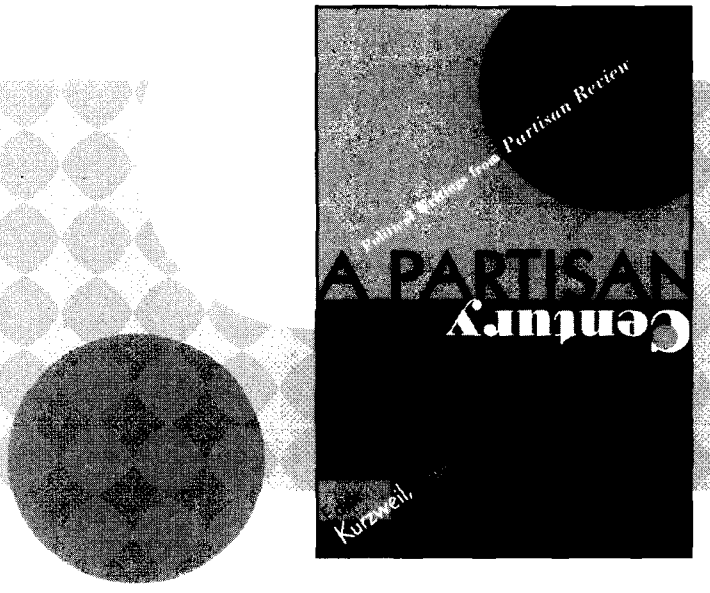

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COMMENTS

Eric Breindel was an extraordinary journalist. He has been lavishly praised by Governor Pataki, Mayor Giuliani, Senator Moynihan, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Norman Podhoretz, Martin Peretz, and others. But I would like to emphasize that he was courageous, honest, balanced, and principled. He was also an intellectual journalist, which is rare.

In a volume of his selected pieces, *A Passion for Truth*, just published by HarperCollins, Breindel covers a wide range of subjects and issues. There is astute comment on the question of Communism in America, on Senator McCarthy, and on those who refused to answer questions about their politics. Breindel is particularly perceptive when he points out that McCarthy made it difficult for liberal anti-Communists to call anyone a Communist. He discusses many national and international questions, and is most enlightening on the subject of Israel, which he supported strongly, and on the problems of anti-Semitism in America. There are observations on reverse racism, such as the Crown Heights affair, among other such incidents. Breindel is always reasonable, restrained, and remarkably intelligent about everything he discusses. We should remember, too, that most of these pieces were written when Breindel was ill and in considerable pain.

The volume's introductions, written by John Podhoretz and Senator Moynihan, are complete and very informative, and the book ends with the memorial comments that were made at Breindel's funeral.

WP

Community—or Contradiction? On the same day that Littleton was said to "produce deracinated teens due to the lack of a sense of community," and that administrators, teachers, and parents were said to create "skewed community values," President Clinton declared that "we have to redefine the national community so that we have a shared obligation to save children's lives." Moving on to the issue of gun control, he pleaded: "You change the culture, we'll change the laws."

I would suggest, however, that we'd better begin by asking ourselves what we mean by *community.* Originally, the word was defined in opposition to *society*—*Gemeinschaft* vs. *Gesellschaft,* as coined by Ferdinand Tönnies. Community, based on personal feelings and contact, derived from closeness and togetherness. Society, based on the common interests of communities that ultimately comprised the nation, was an impersonal and fairly removed association to defend common interests. Thus it was assumed that belonging to one's small group and being part of one's national entity described allegiances that might well clash, but that citizens,

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with the help of values ingested in their communities, would have learned to judge the larger concerns as well. (Volunteering for service in the Civil War or in World War II comes to mind.)

By amalgamating these terms, we deprive both of their meanings and thus arrive at impersonal *Gemeinschaft,* and at a *Gesellschaft* based on legalities rather than on the interests that link its various communities. Moreover, since these communities increasingly are being encouraged to form within ethnic enclaves, which are, in turn, based more and more on laws encouraging separatism, the possibilities for creating a cohesive *Gesellschaft* become hopelessly diminished. Is it not time to go back to clear definitions of these words, and thereby to focus on what we really are talking about? Clearly, semantic manipulations won't change our culture. And they certainly won't "save children's lives."

The View from Italy The war in the Balkans looked different from Italy than it did from New York or Washington, closer and more ominous. Although the situation has begun to resolve itself, the conflict is bound to have major effects on our relations with the countries of Europe. Yes, President Clinton managed to hold the NATO alliance together, but on the streets of Italian cities (and in Paris) one could, once again, see posters saying "American forces of occupation, get out." Every time a NATO plane roared overhead, people began to talk about their experiences in World War II, recounting their parents' tales or remembering their own reactions when, as small children, they had been herded into bomb shelters. Just like Americans, Italians have been upset at the fate of the Kosovars, but at the same time felt threatened by the repercussions of being overrun with refugees for whom they might have to find work and shelter. (Canceled and delayed flights were not on their minds, but on those of the tourists.) Still, however much my Italian friends and acquaintances tried to hide their disenchantment with America from me, there is no doubt that they blamed us (and even more Tony Blair) rather than NATO—to which they proudly belong—for taking on Milosevic. Most of all, they put the onus on President Clinton for having plunged them into a situation they feel he (and his advisors) barely understood in all its complexities. (For the most part, those on the right insisted we should have acted much sooner, while those on the left were against "American imperialism.")

"It is his war, not ours," stated one Bolognese during a lively dinner discussion on May 22 about the advisability of a ground war. The others chimed in, praising and maligning their own politicians according to how they were handling this impossible situation, and worrying about the

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long-range consequences of the war, not only for NATO, but for the European Union and the value of their new currency, the euro. They told of brothers and sons of military age who were advised not to leave the country, and wondered by what criteria men would be selected. (I was grateful no one pointed out that America was supplying all the equipment while promising "not to lose American lives.") I was struck, also, by the heated way they argued, without a trace of the political correctness that in the U.S. now squelches serious, honest disagreements among people of different party affiliations. And there were no *ad hominem* attacks, either.

Eugenio Scalfari, the founder of *La Repubblica*, began his May 23 editorial with a comparison to the film *The Colors of Victory*, and went on to state: "Clinton has started a war with a country that is a flea compared to the American lion, and for that very reason it can escape its paws." Yet Clinton must win "because that is his moral objective. . . .[His] victory, like that of the film's president, must be achieved at any cost, and requires Milosevic's defeat," Scalfari continued somewhat snidely.

President Clinton's editorial in the *International Herald Tribune* on the following day, though emphasizing our humanitarian mission to end "ethnic cleansing" and get the Kosovar refugees back home, essentially agreed. But he emphasized that Milosevic had failed to divide the alliance; that there was unrest in Serbia; that the air strikes had done much damage; and that the ranks of the Kosovo Liberation Army were swelling. (On balance, the Italian press had mixed reports about the KLA's strength; it agreed that there was much devastation, but was less certain about the "broad and deep support in the alliance.")

Scalfari, however, blamed the White House for refusing to negotiate in order to hold out for a total victory, and pointed out that Milosevic could not surrender without being condemned by the Human Rights Tribunal. (It remains to be seen, I believe, whether his latest agreement to NATO terms is true capitulation or a ploy to gain time.) Scalfari argued that because the ends of the war have changed from the "moral right" to eliminate ethnic cleansing, to military intervention guaranteeing the Kosovars' return to their homes, to imposing the conditions on Milosevic's surrender, any attempts at settlement must fail. Although Scalfari also placed responsibility on Milosevic, he was really concerned with what all this meant for Italy. He idly wondered whether a member country of NATO could pursue an independent line of action—without leaving that organization. Since that isn't in the cards, he suggested that it might at least be useful to fire NATO's press secretary, Jamie Shea, who, night after night, according to Scalfari, told Europeans that "we have had an excellent day, with nine hundred sorties, and then goes on to enumerate the register of victims due to 'collateral error.' "

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Jamie Shea's summaries followed me to Paris. His triumphant reports certainly helped feed the anti-Americanism which, in recent years, had very much subsided. Unfortunately, General Clark's reports, mostly addressed to an American readership, sounded triumphalist when translated into Italian and French, and reinforced all the negative stereotypes seized upon to criticize us. What's more, the war was being compared to Vietnam, as another attack on a small country by the only remaining superpower. Now that the left is in government in most Central European countries, this situation has encouraged a new New Left to emerge. Whether the recent terrorist attacks in both countries are isolated events, or are perpetrated by a resurgence of the former Red Brigades or other groups with similar aims, is a moot point: Kosovo, among other things, is being used as a means to revive an anti-Americanism we thought had been licked, and to destabilize the socialist governments that, like Pareto's foxes, have turned into the new lions—and have left room now for a new species of fox.

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DENIS DONOGHUE

Ireland: Race, Nation, State (Part Two)

I bring forward these considerations of Irish nationalism to clarify the relation between Yeats's work as a cultural nationalist and his dealings with magic. We have only to note his emphasis on subconscious, collective experience, in the essay on magic, to see how compatible they are:

> I believe in the practice and philosophy of what we have agreed to call magic, in what I must call the evocation of spirits, though I do not know what they are, in the power of creating magical illusions, in the visions of truth in the depths of the mind when the eyes are closed; and I believe in three doctrines, which have, as I think, been handed down from early times, and been the foundations of nearly all magical practices. These doctrines are:—
> (1) that the borders of our minds are ever shifting, and that many minds can flow into one another, as it were, and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy,
> (2) that the borders of our memories are as shifting, and that our memories are a part of one great memory, the memory of Nature herself, and
> (3) that this great mind and great memory can be evoked by symbols.

So everything begins to cohere: ancestral memories, magic, the *spiritus mundi*, the summoning of a race to become a nation, the practice of an antinomian politics as cultural nationalism, the politics of difference, the tragic theater. In the 1892 version of "To Ireland in the Coming Times" Yeats clarified the propinquity of magic and cultural nationalism by claiming for himself, by comparison with Davis, Mangan, and Ferguson, that

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Editor's note: "Ireland: Race, Nation, State" is an extended version of the 1998 Parnell Memorial Lecture originally delivered at Magdalene College, Cambridge, on March 9. The first half of this article appeared in *Partisan Review*'s Spring 1999 issue.

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> My rhymes more than their rhyming tell
> Of the dim visions old and deep,
> That God gives unto man in sleep.
> For round about my table go
> The magical powers to and fro.

It follows that Yeats must assert that Ireland was a nation to the extent of its cultural difference from England. If England was, as Yeats thought, rotten with positivism and industrialism, Ireland must be—and especially the West of Ireland—an antinomian culture, a place of villages and townlands, mindful of ancient lore and natural magic. He must find in the West sufficient reasons, aesthetic and spiritual, for rejecting the lure of modernism. In "Literature and the Living Voice" he wrote:

> Irish poetry and Irish stories were made to be spoken or sung, while English literature, alone of great literatures, because the newest of them all, has all but completely shaped itself in the printing-press. In Ireland to-day the old world that sang and listened is, it may be for the last time in Europe, face to face with the world that reads and writes, and their antagonism is always present under some name or other in Irish imagination and intellect.

Those reflections justified Yeats's recourse to the theater. "Wherever the old imaginative life lingers," he said, "it must be stirred to more life, or at the worst, kept alive, and in Ireland this is the work, it may be, of the Gaelic movement." By the Gaelic movement I think he meant to include what he later called the Celtic Renaissance.

But Yeats's boldest gesture, I have come to think, was to join his work as a cultural nationalist with that of European Symbolism and the occult. By that designation I mean to include not only Mallarmé and the other poets and dramatists presented in Arthur Symons's *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* but the whole neo-Platonic tradition with Blake as its greatest adept. Symons wrote of Symbolism that it is "a literature in which the visible world is no longer a reality, and the unseen world no longer a dream." It may seem a wild project to act upon that emphasis while conjuring a race to come forth as a nation and to take its place in history. But Yeats did not want Ireland to become a nation like any other. In "The Celtic Element in Literature" he makes the antithetical nature of his desire quite clear. Taking up the theme where he thought Renan and Arnold had left it, he did not engage with Arnold's talk of race and nation,

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but he construed the strange qualities of early Irish stories as cognate with the transfiguring force of Symbolism:

> I will put this differently and say that literature dwindles to a mere chronicle of circumstance, or passionless fantasies, and passionless meditations, unless it is constantly flooded with the passions and beliefs of ancient times, and that of all the fountains of the passions and beliefs of ancient times in Europe, the Slavonic, the Finnish, the Scandinavian, and the Celtic, the Celtic alone has been for centuries close to the main river of European literature.

I am not sure that Yeats knew those literatures well enough to pronounce upon them or to make an invidious comparison, but we may pass over that consideration.

I should emphasize, however, Yeats's insistence on the transforming, subjective power of the imagination. History becomes freedom or virtue, the force of will is changed to the force of imagination, character as something given is changed to personality as something chosen, nature becomes creative power, time is changed to what Yeats calls "the Moods," image is transformed into symbol, mind into dream—"the generative aspect of the mind," as Allen Grossman calls it—and at last knowledge is transfigured as wisdom. It follows that in Yeats's early work as a cultural nationalist, the poet is the exemplar, the one in whom desire knows itself for what it is. He is the bard, reciting ancient lore for the benefit of the people for whom he sings. This motive animates his early work and persists, despite many inducements to disgust and rage, till the end of his life.

David Lloyd has argued, in *Anomalous States*, that Yeats's work as a cultural nationalist came to a crisis if not to an end in 1916. When Pearse and the other leaders of the Easter Rising took to arms, they appropriated Yeats's Ireland, seized his myths and symbols, and removed the sources of his authority. After Easter Week and the execution of the insurgents, Yeats could appeal to no authority but his own: he could no longer be the national bard. In his poems of Easter 1916 he could only pay tribute to the heroic, transforming power of men who had chosen to go their own militant way—which was not his way—and to bring the people with them. The peremptory tone of Yeats's poems and plays after 1916 is explained by their being "speech acts" in a particular mode, performatives, imperatives.

The evidence is not decisive. It could be argued that in the years from 1907 to 1913, that is, from the disturbances at the first performances of

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Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* to the controversy over Hugh Lane's paintings and the Dublin Lock-Out of 1913—Yeats was no longer a cultural nationalist in the original sense: he was a poet at a distance from the people he summoned to come forth; he was a critic, a satirist, a polemicist; his note was contempt rather than exhortation. But, leaving Yeats aside for the moment, it would be reasonable to argue that the work of cultural nationalism came to a crisis in 1915 when Hyde resigned from the presidency of the Gaelic League on the grounds that the League had become a political rather than a cultural organization. In the same year Pearse dissociated himself, in his pamphlet *Ghosts,* from constitutional nationalists as men who had allowed themselves to be defeated by the fall and death of Parnell. It soon became clear that the conviction of identity which Yeats, Hyde, Lady Gregory, and their colleagues provoked in those who attended to them had issued in desires that those writers could not have anticipated, desires that could not be appeased by Home Rule in any of the forms in which it had been proposed.

Pearse was the crucial figure in bringing about this change and in forcing Ireland to the extremity of becoming, after bloodshed and the Civil War, a state. The word "state" appears only once in the Proclamation of the Irish Republic—the text is the work of Pearse, James Connolly, and Thomas MacDonagh, of Pearse mainly—but that once is fundamental: "we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State." There are four references to the Irish "people," three to the "nation," one to "nationhood," three to the "republic," and one to "Poblacht na hEireann." It was as if the founding of a state were the culminating act in a series of acknowledgements testifying to a conviction of nationhood and identity. The sense of identity floats free of its mere history. Like Yeats, and like de Valera in the Constitution of 1937, Pearse appeals not to Irish history as the record of events in the order in which they have occurred but to the nation that has existed and continues to exist "in the minds and loyalties of its people," as Liam de Paor has expressed it, "independently, as it were, of its own history of some centuries past." Pearse implies that the true history of Ireland, as distinct from the specious history it has officially had, is not a record of the English presence in Ireland for more than seven hundred years but of the six attempts in the past three hundred years to remove that presence: presumably he means certain acts of insurrection in 1641, 1689, 1798, 1803, 1848, and 1867. The only reference in the Proclamation to the refusal of Unionists in certain parts of Ulster to countenance any nationalist proceeding is in this sentence:

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> The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.

Pearse knew, as everyone should have known since 1886, that the minority he referred to would not acquiesce in a Republic of the entire island of Ireland, any more than it had acquiesced in Home Rule, but he hoped—as Hyde did, and de Valera at least for some years—that Unionists would come to recognize that they were Irish rather than British, and subside into an Irish republic, if such a thing were to be brought about.

Meanwhile the Proclamation summoned the Irish race not only to believe in a transfigured history but to take part in an insurgent politics. Pearse did not have an elaborate political philosophy, but his thinking seems to have been compatible with the tendentious politics enunciated fifteen years later by Carl Schmitt. The state, according to Schmitt, is "the political status of an organized people in an enclosed territorial unit." In its literal sense and its historical appearance, "the state is a specific entity of a people." Derrida has phrased it in slightly different terms: the state is "the particular modality of the mode of existence of the people (*Volk*)." More to the point of Schmitt's theory, "the specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy." It follows that the political does not exist without the figure of the enemy and the determined possibility of an actual war. The state is the teleological "end" of the political, and it is necessarily characterized by the designation of friend and enemy. In this spirit, Pearse turned Yeats's cultural nationalism of difference—between Ireland and England—into a politics of friendship and hostility. We are friends with our Unionist brothers and sisters in the North, but England—at least for the moment—is our enemy.

It is still in dispute whether the Home Rule Bill that passed in Westminster in 1914 but was suspended for the duration of the war would have led, in the fullness of a few more years, to the complete independence of Ireland. I have heard persuasive arguments on both sides of the question, without being quite persuaded to either view. I cannot regret that Pearse and his companions acted as they did and when they did, without anything resembling a mandate. Revolutions hardly ever have a mandate. What Pearse had—what he justly claimed—was the authority of understanding Irish history and tradition as a long travail issuing by force of logic and

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desire in revolution. The fact that previous revolutions failed only made it more urgent that this latest one succeed. It is difficult to deny to Pearse the right to his own understanding, which was so much more plausible than anyone else's. Some students of Easter Week have wondered how the Rising would have turned out if it had been led by Connolly rather than by Pearse: would Ireland have turned toward European Socialism for its identity? I doubt it. Socialism, indeed Marxism in any of its forms, needs, if it is to have a chance of thriving, an industrial society, and the whole concatenation of factories and trade unions. Ireland has never had an Industrial Revolution, except for a brief period in Belfast and the Lagan Valley. Connolly understood this, and committed himself—as Constance Markiewicz and other feminist leaders did—to the separatist movement under Pearse's leadership. But I feel some misgiving when I reflect that one of the main consequences of Pearse's being the leader of the Rising was the identification of Nationalism and Catholicism, after more than a hundred years in which most of the leaders of Nationalism were Protestants. The continuity of Pearse, Cosgrave, and de Valera meant that, in practice, Irish politics would be deduced—to the scandal of many Catholics, let me say—from Roman Catholic theology, a procedure from which the institutions of both Church and State have inevitably suffered, as in the debacle of the Mother and Child scheme of 1951.

Pearse could not have foreseen the consequences of the Easter Rising—the assembly of the first Dail Eireann in January 1919; the (British) Government of Ireland Act of 1920, which established Northern Ireland and retained it as part of the United Kingdom; the Articles of Agreement between Britain and Ireland in 1921; the ratification of those articles by Dail Eireann in 1922; the constitution of the same year; the civil war; the victory of de Valera's Fianna Fail party in 1932; the new Constitution of 1937; and the declaration of the Irish Republic in 1948, an entity recognized by the United Kingdom in 1949. It is sometimes maintained by disaffected nationalists that this sequence of events has merely extended British colonial rule in Ireland under the guise of independence. Such critics point out that Ireland has adopted most of its administrative institutions from the United Kingdom and has not radically changed the disposition of power and wealth among the social classes. Yeats anticipated this expression of disappointment:

> Parnell came down the road, he said to a cheering man:
> "Ireland shall get her freedom and you still break stone."

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Ireland has taken over from the United Kingdom most of its arrangements for the conduct of law, a two-tier system of government, a similar police force, a system of class formations favorable to the middle and upper-middle classes, and similar arrangements in economics, banking, and investment. I am not convinced that this decision on the part of the Free State and later governments has been either an error or a sin.

Besides, it is a fact of inescapable significance that since 1922 Ireland—most of it, twenty-six of the thirty-two counties—has been governed by Irish men and women and is otherwise subject only to the institutions the Irish people have chosen to join, notably the European Union. That seems to me to make such a difference that I am content to put up with every defect in the government of Ireland, even beyond the third generation. Perusal of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth,* and later work by Benedict Anderson, Edward Said, Partha Chatterjee, and Homi Bhabhi has not weakened my resolve in that respect. I deplore the faults of successive Irish governments: a misguided policy on the Irish language, a futile economic war between Ireland and England in the 1930s, folly in the question of censorship of books and magazines, the confounding of politics and religion, the bad faith of governments on the question of Northern Ireland. But I don't regret that Ireland stayed neutral in the Second World War, or that it has chosen, at least for the present, to stay out of NATO and to maintain its independent judgment, at least occasionally, in the United Nations.

What I most deplore is the determination of Irish governments to suppress the republican tradition in practice while paying lip service to it on the standard anniversaries. I realize that the Free State government had its hands full: it had to set up a working system of administration, entailing reasonable arrangements in matters of law, agriculture, education, economic development, transportation, and so forth. It had to deal with the aftermath of a civil war, continued violence, assassinations. But I can't believe that the execution of republican prisoners, even for crimes of murder, was justified. What do you do with your gunmen when the revolution is over? Long-term imprisonment would have been a just response. I concede that in such circumstances the Free State government could not have been expected to bring patient and imaginative consideration to these questions: what should we do with the separatist passions we ourselves felt and acted upon a few years ago, and how are we to comport ourselves in relation to the United Kingdom and, more particularly, to those in Northern Ireland who would take up arms rather than make common cause with us?

De Valera had less excuse than Cosgrave for doing nothing. The institutions of the state were more settled, though not entirely to his

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satisfaction. By 1937, after five years in power, he was in a position to bring forward a new constitution to replace the one enacted by the Free State with effect from December 6, 1922, and to have it pass. It is clear that he tried to recognize the republican tradition by making a distinction between the nation, the matter of the first three articles of the Constitution, and the state, the matter of Articles 4 to 11. The Preamble pays tribute to the Irish people and their "unremitting struggle to regain the rightful independence of our Nation." Article 2 declares that "the national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands and the territorial seas." Article 3 begins: "Pending the re-integration of the national territory," but then goes on to accept that the jurisdiction of the Parliament and government extends only to the twenty-six counties established as subject to the laws of the Irish Free State. These provisions have weathered many disputes in law, including a dissenting judgment in Russell v. Fanning (1988) in which Justice Hederman said that the reunification of the national territory is "by the provisions of the Preamble to the Constitution and of Article 3 of the Constitution a constitutional imperative and not one the pursuit or non-pursuit of which is within the discretion of the government or any organ of the state." This view was later endorsed by the Supreme Court in McGimpsey v. Ireland (1990). I interpret Hederman as saying that the reunification of the national territory is a constitutional imperative rather than a policy to be pursued or not according to the wishes of the government that happens to be in power. But the fact is that no government since 1937 has in any consistent degree obeyed the instruction. Gerry Adams, President of Sinn Fein, is the only contemporary politician who continues to speak of "the constitutional imperative of pursuing Irish unity." Indeed, de Valera seems to have accepted, after 1932, that there was nothing he could do to get rid of Partition. He continued to bring the issue up in discussions with the British government in 1932, 1936, 1938, and later years. But the Anglo-Irish Agreement, in April 1938, promised the Northern Parliament that it would never be separated from the United Kingdom. The part that Northern Ireland played in the Second World War was a further bond of relation to the United Kingdom, a fact embodied in the Ireland Act, 1949. De Valera seems to have given up the ghost of Irish unity in 1938, though he continued to keep the aspiration at least notionally alive. He regarded it as the most acute tragedy of his life that he had failed to bring Partition to a peaceful end.

One of the consequences of de Valera's sad belief, as early as 1938, that he could do nothing to bring about Irish unity was the handing over of republican conviction, in effect, to the IRA especially in the years of the war, and the establishing of a new republican party, Sean MacBride's Clann

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na Poblachta, in time to contest the general election in January 1948. In 1957, when de Valera took up his last administration, the Northern Ireland Parliament and the singlemindedness of Unionist zeal for the union of the United Kingdom seemed to be scripted in stone. Governments in Dublin could yearn and make diminished noise on the appropriate public occasions, but they soon gave up even imagining a united Ireland. Until the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association started protesting in the North in 1968, with violent consequences up to the present moment, every Irish government increasingly regarded the question of Northern Ireland as beyond the reach of politics: it was, in practice, Britain's business. As a result, no government seriously tried to imagine how republican sentiments and desires, either in the North or the South, might be acknowledged, or what provision should be made for them. I wish I could believe that this situation has been changed by the Sunningdale Agreement of December 1973, the Anglo-Irish Agreement of November 15, 1985, the Downing Street Declaration, or the more recent Framework Document, none of which has even committed itself to saying what "a majority of the people of Northern Ireland" means. Does it mean 51 percent? I doubt it. I appreciate that these documents are repugnant to Unionists, but they should also be repugnant to Nationalists, because they give Unionists a veto on every proposal that might lead, in however distant a future, to a united Ireland. As a further consequence of this neglect, over a period of forty years, the IRA is in a position to claim—with some justification—that they, rather than the government in Dublin, are the authentic guardians of the republican, separatist tradition. I wish to be as clear as possible about my own convictions. I remain a Nationalist, but I think it is most unlikely that Unionists in the North will ever be persuaded to make common cause with the South. David Trimble and his ancestors have been in the North for three hundred and seventy years; they still think of themselves as British rather than as Irish. Perhaps de Valera and his associates could have done more to persuade the Trimbles to sink their differences with us in a united Ireland. Some political commentators have argued that unity, according to some definition of unity, is logically inescapable. I hope so. In the meantime I do not condone a single act of bloodshed, nor do I think that the social conditions in Northern Ireland, wounding to Catholics as they have been, have ever justified the taking up of arms. At the same time, the desires embodied in the republican tradition can't be merely suppressed, any more justly or effectively than loyalist desires which have a strong historical right to persist.

I have referred to bad faith on the part of Irish governments and especially of de Valera's administration. But I do not share the common view, represented fairly accurately by Neil Jordan's film *Michael Collins*, that de

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Valera was a sinister figure, a murderous angel. He was a devout Catholic, something of a scholar, a teacher, a leader, ardent in the cause of the Irish language and the unity of Ireland. But he was also spiritually constricted, such that he determined to express his love of Ireland even if it entailed repressing its citizens. It was hard to feel alive and at ease in the country he governed. Not surprisingly, many Irish writers deplored the narrowness of de Valera's Ireland, its joylessness. I have in mind Sean O'Faolain, Frank O'Connor, Austin Clarke, Flann O'Brien, Elizabeth Bowen, and Kate O'Brien. But a state is always disappointing, especially one that has issued from a high rhetoric of race and nation. It is bound to incur the sardonic note of disillusion. Think of the state of Israel, the grand hopes of its setting forth in the years before and after 1948, the heartbreak of its racial history, and now the degree to which Netanyahu's Israel is a state like any other. Ireland, too: the discrepancy between the race divined through its myths, the nation it was summoned and supposed to become, and the state it became is hard to be patient with, subject to the consideration that at least it is independent in part and a decent place, on the whole, in which to live. It does not own any nuclear or hydrogen bombs or germ weapons. That's something worth making a note of. But it could have been an even better country. In "Parnell's Funeral" (1933) Yeats wrote:

> The rest I pass, one sentence I unsay.
> Had de Valera eaten Parnell's heart
> No loose-lipped demagogue had won the day,
> No civil rancour torn the land apart.
>
> Had Cosgrave eaten Parnell's heart, the land's
> Imagination had been satisfied,
> Or lacking that, government in such hands,
> O'Higgins its sole statesman had not died.
>
> Had even O'Duffy—but I name no more—
> Their school a crowd, his master solitude;
> Through Jonathan Swift's dark grove he passed, and there
> Plucked bitter wisdom that enriched his blood.

I don't recognize de Valera as a loose-lipped demagogue: he was tight-lipped to a fault. But I am bound to respond to Yeats's motif according to which one eats the heart of a dead man to acquire his qualities. No Irish leader has eaten Parnell's heart or imagined what form a politics that remembered Swift and Parnell would take.

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But "Parnell's Funeral" was not Yeats's last word on politics, race, nation, and state. I will end with a reference to two literary episodes in 1938. In that year Samuel Beckett published his first novel, *Murphy.* The fourth chapter is set, briefly, in the General Post Office in Dublin, Pearse's chosen place for the Rising and, outside, for the Proclamation of the Republic. Neary is contemplating from behind the statue of Cuchulain, Oliver Shepherd's work:

> Neary had bared his head, as though the holy ground meant something to him. Suddenly he flung aside his hat, sprang forward, seized the dying hero by the thighs and began to dash his head against his buttocks, such as they are.

A policeman approaches, but one Wylie, a former pupil of Neary's, leads Neary off to the exit. When the policeman shouts to them, Neary says: "John o' God's. Hundred per cent harmless. . .Stillorgan. . .Not Dundrum." That is: a nursing home for mentally ill patients, not an asylum for the criminally insane.

Presumably Beckett wrote the scene in 1937 or earlier. I have no evidence that Yeats read the novel then or later. We are dealing with a coincidence. In April 1938 he wrote one of his last poems, "The Statues," which is based on a conviction he arrived at by reading Adolf Furtwaengler and other historians of art:

> There are moments when I am certain that art must once again accept those Greek proportions which carry into plastic art the Pythagorean numbers, those faces which are divine because all there is empty and measured. Europe was not born when Greek galleys defeated the Persian hordes at Salamis, but when the Doric studios sent out those broad-backed marble statues against the multiform, vague, expressive Asiatic sea, they gave to the sexual instinct of Europe its goal, its fixed type.

I'll read only the last stanza:

> When Pearse summoned Cuchulain to his side,
> What stalked through the Post Office? What intellect,

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What calculation, number, measurement, replied?
We Irish, born into that ancient sect
But thrown upon this filthy modern tide
And by its formless spawning fury wrecked,
Climb to our proper dark, that we may trace
The lineaments of a plummet-measured face.

Pearse revered the name and legendary bearing of Cuchulain only less devoutly than the more ascertainable memory of Columcille, one of the three patron saints of Ireland. Summoning is what Yeats is doing, too, in this poem as in "Parnell's Funeral"; it is the most typical act of his later poems. "Sect" is his word now for the earlier "race" as he bodies forth Pearse as representative Irish figure and opposes him to the filthy modern tide of democracy, opposes Greek sculptural form—as in Phidias—to Asiatic formlessness. In several of these later poems Yeats deduces a politics from an aesthetic, more particularly from the history of sculpture: the Pythagorean theory of numbers is supposed to have made possible not only Phidias but Michelangelo and a corresponding praxis of great men. Yeats's pamphlet *On the Boiler* gives some theory in favor of the politics and is chiefly to be read as indicating not what the poems mean but how close Yeats was, in 1938, to the end of his tether. His talk of "rule of kindred" is noxious. In the poems it hardly matters, because there it is merely part of the elaborate mixture of allusions and invocations in each poem; it is to be valued mainly for its enabling the poet to achieve his distinctive, desperately driven tone, his sense of the world rather than the world. I construe the violence of the last poems as a sign of rage and desperation. He hoped against hope that the Irish people would resist the claims of democracy and climb to "our proper dark," the same darkness of subjectivity and transformation in which we found Swift and Parnell.

Yeats knew that Ireland would have nothing to do with it, and would not even choose to understand what he was saying. Modern Irish politics is a politics of sameness, not a politics of difference. Many Irish people have grown tired of being told that they are interesting beyond their numbers or that the trajectory from race through nation to state has made them distinguished among their European associates. They want to be the same as everyone else, the same as England to begin with and as the United States later on. It is their right. But only with misgivings: there are other values, which we advert to when we murmur name upon name—Davis, Parnell, Yeats, Hyde, and their company—and when on this occasion we come together to honor the name of Parnell.

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JEFFREY HERF

Old Arguments and New Problems

The history of the public memory of the Holocaust in post-1945 Germany is also the history of efforts to drive it out of public life. These efforts have failed in the past and chances are that, at least in the near future, the tradition of this memory will persist. Two recent episodes demonstrate these patterns: the debate over the construction of a memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin; and a public dispute between the German novelist Martin Walser and the President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Ignatz Bubis, about the memory of the Holocaust. Both debates have questioned the widespread conventional wisdom about the timing and sources of Holocaust memory in German politics.

This wisdom often includes four contentions. First, that during the first twenty postwar years in West Germany, the crimes of the Nazi past were silenced and repressed. Second, that memory came belatedly when this silence was broken in the 1960s following the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, the Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt-am-Main soon after, and, most importantly, the confluence of generational change and new leftist protest. Third is the assertion that an "anti-fascist" left was the primary challenge to public amnesia and to the judicial delay of the conservative organizers of the postwar economic and political restoration, from Konrad Adenauer to Helmut Kohl. Fourth, to the extent that German memory of the Holocaust existed, it did so as a result of pressure from Israel, the American government and American Jewish organizations.

There is evidence to support aspects of these assertions. Each captures parts of the postwar story. Yet the picture they convey is incomplete, and its transformation into conventional wisdom contributes to ignorance of a fuller history of this memory. It thus leaves today's adherents of continued public memory at a disadvantage. With the publication of my book *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys*, I offered a moderate revisionist history of the subject—by pushing the origins of this memory back in time to the earliest postwar weeks and months, and by drawing attention to the variety of *indigenous German*

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political sources of its emergence. For this is also the history of an often very unpopular and irritating yet distinctively German tradition of remembering the crimes of the Nazi era. While German nationalists have long sought to present this tradition as a humiliating ritual imposed by foreigners, named and unnamed, and the generation of the 1960s has been reluctant to acknowledge voices amidst the silence of the 1950s, both dimensions are important to recall—especially in light of last year's controversies.

Observers of the German scene have often asked why Germans forgot, repressed, or avoided public discussion of the Holocaust. Given extensive support for Nazism, a party membership of seven million in 1945, twelve million soldiers (many of whom fought on the Eastern front), the absence of a successful internal revolt, bitter resistance to the Allies until the end of the war, and about one hundred thousand persons with some direct connection to the Holocaust (the Allies indicted ninety thousand Germans for war crimes and crimes against humanity in the immediate postwar months and years), it is not hard to understand why after 1945 these people and their friends and relatives would keep their heads down and their mouths shut, assert that they "forgot" their past activities, and give their votes to politicians who promised to leave the past behind.

Thus the silence is easy to explain. The more difficult questions are the following: given all of this, why was there any public memory of the Holocaust at all? Why, against many expectations of the early postwar years, did this memory emerge—most strongly in the restorationist Federal Republic? And why was it definitively repressed in anti-fascist East Germany? I believe that public discussion and political memory did not begin in the 1960s with the new left and Brandt's *Ostpolitik* but during the pervasive silence and avoidance in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It rested on "multiple restorations" of previously defeated non- and anti-Nazi political traditions. Thanks to the Allied victory and the postwar occupation, leaders of these traditions were able to return to political life. The inauguration of a distinctively West German tradition of public memory was above all due to efforts by the leading Social Democrats—Kurt Schumacher, the leader of the Social Democratic Party after 1945; Ernst Reuter, the Mayor of West Berlin; and the parliamentary leader Carlo Schmid—and by the liberal Theodor Heuss, who held the symbolically significant office of Federal President. In East Germany, a minority of Communists, especially those returning from exile in Mexico City, attempted to incorporate the memory of the murder of the Jews into East German anti-fascist public discourse, commemorative ceremonies, and policy. But as a result of the anti-cosmopolitan campaign in the Soviet bloc, they had been purged, imprisoned, or driven into exile by the winter of 1952-1953.

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The collapse of the wartime anti-Nazi coalition and its replacement with Cold War fault lines profoundly influenced the history of the emergence and suppression of the memory of the Jewish catastrophe in both Germanys. In the East, the Jews were denounced as cosmopolitans, as allies of American imperialism and Zionist aggression. In an astonishingly brief time, wartime expressions of Communist solidarity with persecuted Jewry returned to the familiar Marxist-Leninist dogma and even to the anti-Semitic stereotypes of the supposedly vast international power of Jews. The Communists pushed them to the margins of those privileged to be remembered as victims of fascism. In the West, at the same time that the Adenauer government blocked an effective program of timely postwar judicial reckoning and prematurely reintegrated former Nazi officials and soldiers into public life, Heuss and the Social Democrats sounded dissonant notes. During the Cold War's intellectual mobilization against Communism and the Soviet Union, memory of the Holocaust tended also to recall the Nazi race war of 1941-1944 on the Eastern front against "Jewish Bolshevism." This was an awkward, embarrassing recollection for conservative politicians in the West. Yet even though Holocaust memory and memories of the racist nature of Nazi anti-Communism were often separated in the Adenauer restoration of the 1950s, the small number of politicians and their supporters in intellectual life initiated an often unpopular but persistent public memory of the Nazi crimes against Jews.

This modest revision rests in part on "multiple restorations." The Allied victory and postwar occupation made it possible to crush the Nazi party and prevent its return, to foster Allied political conceptions, whether Western or Soviet, and to bring about the revival of past indigenous, previously defeated non- and anti-Nazi German political traditions. The leading political figures of early postwar life came of political age between 1900 and 1930. Their return after 1945 meant that this era was both a "zero hour," in which the Allies and Germans permitted to return to political life consigned many now disgraced German traditions to oblivion, as well as a moment of restoration of the traditions of "the other Germany." Its leaders experienced Nazism, World War II, and the Holocaust in their mature, not their young and formative years, and interpreted it on the basis of long-held beliefs. Adenauer (1876-1967), the leader of postwar Christian Democracy and Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany from 1949 to 1963, had been Mayor of Cologne from 1917 to 1933. Kurt Schumacher (1895-1952) had served as a member of the Reichstag in the Weimar Republic. Theodor Heuss (1884-1963) had worked as a journalist and a professor of politics, and had been active in liberal politics in the Weimar years as well. Reuter (1889-1953), the Mayor of West Berlin during the crucial early years of the Cold War, had

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been a Social Democratic politician in Weimar; after being imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp, he went into exile in Ankara, Turkey. The Communist leadership in East Germany also came of political age before 1933 and drew on an intact political tradition. Walter Ulbricht (1893-1973), a comrade and friend of Rosa Luxembourg's and the effective head of the East German government, was born in 1893. Otto Grotewohl (1894-1964), co-chair of the Socialist Unity Party, and Wilhelm Pieck (1876-1960) were of that generation as well. So was Paul Merker (1894-1969), the leading German Communist in 1920, whose unsuccessful efforts to raise the Jewish question in East Berlin led to his political downfall.

In 1947, Schumacher first supported restitution for the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust in West Germany. In the early 1950s, the parliamentary debates over restitution payments to Jewish survivors enabled Adenauer, with SPD support, to pass legislation despite the divisions and lukewarm support of his own party. When Germans then called for an end to discussion of the Nazi past or compared their own suffering in the war to that of the Jews, SPD leaders such as Carlo Schmid pointed out the unique nature of the mass murder of Jews. In Berlin, Reuter spoke passionately about the need to remember the Jews who fought and died in the Warsaw Ghetto. In the Bundestag in the 1950s and 1960s, Adolf Arndt led the fight, usually in the face of resistance from the conservative and "liberal" Free Democratic Party to extend the statute of limitations on crimes of murder so that the prosecution of those accused of mass murder could continue. Willy Brandt was the first West German Chancellor to visit Israel. His bent knee in Warsaw in 1970 signaled to the world that "the other Germany" was now in power and willing to place the memory of past crimes at the center of national attention. In the 1970s, Helmut Schmidt spoke eloquently in Auschwitz, and on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the anti-Jewish pogrom of November 9, 1938.

Yet the dominant stance towards the memory of the Holocaust was quite different. Though not a member of the anti-Nazi resistance, Adenauer had opposed the Nazis and had been briefly imprisoned by the Gestapo. His wife's early death after the war at the age of fifty-seven stemmed from her two suicide attempts due to her despair over having divulged information about his whereabouts in a Gestapo interrogation. Adenauer believed that Nazism was the result of Prussian authoritarianism, the weakness of individualism, the "materialist world view of Marxism" which eroded religious faith and fostered nihilism, and an ideology of racial superiority which filled the vacuum left by the erosion of the dignity of human beings grounded in Christian natural right. For Adenauer the antidote to these ills was democracy based on Christian

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beliefs in the dignity and value of every individual. He did not examine the role of Christianity in the history of European anti-Semitism.

Therefore, Adenauer pursued a strategy of democratization—by the integration of former and hopefully disillusioned followers of Nazism. As early as the spring of 1946, when the major Nuremberg trial was still going on and thousands of suspects had yet to be charged, in his election speeches Adenauer repeatedly told audiences that "we finally should leave in peace the followers, those who did not oppress others, who did not enrich themselves, and who broke no laws." For him, liberal democracy could not be established against the will of the majority. More accurately, he did not want to risk offending those who could make the difference between electoral victory and defeat. Equating the fortunes of the Christian Democratic Union with the fate of democracy per se, Adenauer's strategy de facto vetoed the aggressive postwar judicial procedures of the West German "amnesty lobby."

Within these limits, Adenauer clearly favored restitution payments to Jewish survivors and to the state of Israel. Yet he also restored pension rights to former members of the Wehrmacht and Nazi regime, and urged American High Commissioner John J. McCloy to grant amnesty and leniency to those who had already been convicted of crimes by the Allies. He gave priority to the integration of ex-Nazi Germans over justice. When in 1959 Theodor Adorno said that repression of the Nazi past was less the product of unconscious processes or deficient memory than "the product of an all-too-wide-awake consciousness," he captured the actual practices of the Adenauer years. "In the house of the hangman," he continued, "it is best not to talk about the rope." Then, the winners in national elections opposed a vigorous program of justice for past crimes and supported premature and undeserved amnesty. The tension between justice and early democratization is a major theme of postwar West German history. But daring more democracy with an electorate unwilling to demand justice meant attaining less justice.

On the margins of this era of reticence, silence, and judicial delay, the distinctive way of remembering the crimes of the Nazi past began as an elite tradition that sounded a soft dissonant note. Theodor Heuss used the office of President of the Federal Republic and its freedom from the pressures of electoral struggles for power to remember Nazi crimes publicly, and to define the office as a repository of the nation's conscience and memory. To his critics, he was the cultured veneer of the Adenauer restoration, and an advocate of eloquent memory separated from politically consequential justice. Yet in speeches about German history and extensive private correspondence with Jewish survivors, resistance veterans, and West German and foreign intellectuals, Heuss began an elite

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tradition of political recollection that would eventually contribute to broader public discussion and action. He could have done much more. Others in his position would have done, and later did do, much less.

Heuss delivered his most important speech about the Nazi past at memorial ceremonies held at the former concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen on November 29 and 30, 1952. Officials of the Federal Republic and representatives of governments and Jewish organizations from Britain, the United States, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, France, Yugoslavia, and Israel gathered to dedicate a memorial to those who died there. The ceremonies were a Western event which reflected the realities of the Cold War and divided memory. None of the Communist states were represented.

Nahum Goldmann spoke on behalf of the World Jewish Congress. He described the destruction of European Jewry, recalling "the millions who found their tragic end in Auschwitz, Treblinka, Dachau; and in Warsaw, Vilna, Bialistock, and in countless other places." By drawing attention to the Eastern geography of the Holocaust, he implicitly pointed out that the geography of memory did not coincide with the fault lines of the Cold War in the West. The Holocaust had largely taken place in a part of Europe that was "behind the Iron Curtain." Goldmann's recounting inevitably called to mind German aggression on the Eastern Front during World War II, which eventually led to the presence of the Red Army in the center of Europe in May 1945. This was an uncomfortable and inconvenient view of causality when Western memory of World War II often gave short shrift to the attack on "Jewish Bolshevism" on the Eastern front. To be sure, there were efforts to separate the memory of the Holocaust from that of the attack on the Soviet Union, but on the whole it did not fit well into Cold War discourse.

Heuss's speech in Bergen-Belsen, "No one will lift this shame from us," was the strongest statement at the time of West German reflection on the mass murder. It was broadcast on radio and reported in the West German press, especially the liberal press. Heuss took issue with those who sought to avoid the crimes of the Nazi past by pointing to the alleged misdeeds of others. "Violence and injustice are not things for which one should or may resort to reciprocal compensation. . . .Every people has in reserve its poets of revenge or, when they get tired, its calculating publicists." He evoked a patriotism self-confident enough to face that evil past honestly rather than seeking to balance it by pointing to Communist misdeeds. He placed the language of patriotism, courage, and honor in the service of memory rather than in that of avoidance and resentment. Heuss's moral imperative was not a burden imposed by the occupiers but a legacy that emerged from previously defeated democratic, liberal, and cosmopolitan

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traditions. From then until the time of Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker's speech of May 8, 1985, the West German tradition of memory rested on a sense of individual responsibility: to face the truth about the past rather than wallow in collective guilt.

Despite years of anti-fascist discourse, the East German regime repressed the memory of the Jewish catastrophe and then moved on to anti-Zionist and at times anti-Semitic ideology and policy, both at home and in the Middle East. The Communist normalcy, established in the anti-cosmopolitan purge of 1952-1953, remained intact until 1989. In April 1990, the first act of the short-lived East German parliament was to acknowledge East Germany's responsibility for the Nazi past and to criticize its Communist predecessor for refusing to pay restitution to Jewish survivors, for not giving primacy to the memory of Jewish persecution, and for its decades of hostility to Israel. The collapse of European and East German Communism (and of its attendant rituals and discourse of anti-fascism) in 1989-1990 opened the door, for the first time since 1945, to a public recollection of the genocide of European Jewry.

Of course, many feared that German unification instead would usher in a new era of forgetfulness accompanied by nationalist euphoria. In fact there were disturbing signs. Neo-Nazi skinheads attacked foreigners physically and actually murdered some in firebombings in Mölln and Rostock. Conservative politicians toyed with anti-foreign sentiments in election campaigns. Young nationalist journalists and intellectuals questioned the continued validity of Germany's Western ties, penned biographies of Hitler that gave scant attention to anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, and offered views of national identity centered on ethnic homogeneity. In 1995, during ceremonies commemorating the end of World War II, an influential group of conservative politicians and intellectuals sought to displace a focus on the memory of the Holocaust to the beginnings of Germany's division and the expulsion of Germans from Eastern Europe after 1945. In the 1990s, on the right wing of German politics and culture, an intellectual-political lobby reemerged which urged that Germany should "finally" be considered a "normal" country, and that a "line be drawn under the past." Following unification, many wondered if the era of public memory of the Holocaust associated with the Bonn Republic was going to end in the new Berlin Republic.

In the 1990s, such nationalist euphoria failed to sweep Bonn's tradition of memory from public life. Unemployment, which hovered around 12 per cent nationally, was and remains as high as 20 to 30 per cent in the former East Germany. This fueled resentments and offered electoral opportunities for regional right-wing successes. Yet a nationalist right wing did not take hold at the national level. Moreover, the traditions of public

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memory of the Holocaust appeared to grow even stronger. In 1995, the parliament agreed to support a proposal initiated by Ignatz Bubis, the President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, to make January 27, the day of the liberation of Auschwitz by the Red Army, a day of remembrance for the victims of National Socialism. Roman Herzog, who entered the office of the Federal Presidency, urged his fellow Germans to be "less uptight" about the past. In fact, he delivered speeches that echoed Heuss's and von Weizsäcker's themes. German publishers brought out books dealing with the Holocaust and Jewish history. Claims for restitution for stolen art and slave labor, revelations of the role of German banks in financing the construction of death camps, and the "Nazi gold" investigation by the American government kept issues of the Holocaust in the press. While the radical right captured national and international headlines, the Social Democrats and Greens made steady progress in state elections.

The most important non-governmental initiative of the 1990s, and that which has made the Holocaust memory an issue the entire national political establishment has to face, has been the effort to build a memorial to Europe's murdered Jews. Since 1988, when the television journalist Lea Rosh and the historian Eberhard Jaeckel first proposed such a memorial for Berlin, the issue has been a subject of extensive public debate. A colloquium was held in which politicians, historians, architects, artists, and public intellectuals actively participated; in two international competitions, a jury of experts chose a proposal by the American architect Peter Eisenman and the sculptor Richard Serra. Supporters of such a memorial argued that it was necessary to mourn the dead properly, to draw attention to the genocide of European Jewry in Nazi policy and break with vague generalizations about "victims of fascism" or of the Second World War, and to recall that the Holocaust had been directed from the government offices in Berlin. Following unification, they added that it was all the more important that the new, unified Germany demonstrate its fidelity to the best traditions of the Federal Republic. They argued that existing concentration camp memorials within Germany were not adequate substitutes because camps were not where the mass murder of European Jewry had taken place. They were comfortably out of sight and mind in Berlin, and thus would be ignored by visitors to the capital. The movement of the German government from Bonn to Berlin should not be accompanied by yet another era of amnesia. Therefore, placing a memorial to the murdered Jews in the very center of Berlin would be both an act of mourning and a recognition of the role that memory of the Holocaust should play in reinforcing support for human rights. In the longer perspective, such a memorial would represent a continuation of Heuss's and Schumacher's efforts to associate patriotism and national honor with the courage to face

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the truth about the past, to assume responsibility for its consequences, and to draw lessons from it.

In the summer and fall of 1998 the conventional political fault lines were confounded as debate over the Berlin Memorial became intertwined with the upcoming national elections. Social Democratic candidate and soon-to-be Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, in a striking departure from his predecessors (Schumacher, Brandt, and Schmidt), took what previously had been primarily a conservative line: Germany and Germans should focus on the present and future and put the burdens of the past behind. The confusion was deepened further by Michael Naumann, Schröder's appointee as Minister of Culture, and a former editor at *Der Spiegel*, *Rowohlt Verlag*, and Henry Holt Books in New York. In some of his first public comments, Naumann appeared to reject emphatically both the general idea of such a memorial as well as its particular form: it was, he argued, superfluous. The "authentic" sites of memory were the already existing memorials in former Nazi concentration camps. A new one would only detract from those already existing, and from museums in Berlin such as the Foundation on the Topography of Terror, the Museum of the Wannsee Conference, and the new Jewish Museum. He said that the monumentalism of the Eisenman-Serra design was reminiscent of Albert Speer's architecture. Naumann's opposition and Schröder's reservations raised old suspicions about some of the leftist generation of 1968, from its Marxist anti-fascism to its hostility to Israel. Was this generation of German left-of-center politicians lacking the emotional link to Jewish issues? If so, perhaps it was not so surprising that Germany's first government of 1968ers should express doubts about the wisdom of building a memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe.

At the end of August, following the furor over Naumann's pronouncements, Schröder wondered in *Die Woche* if it was "right and at all possible to present abstractly the unimaginable horror committed by the Germans." It is hard to understand what in 1998 was "unimaginable" about what the Nazis did to the Jews. No less surprising and disappointing was the public criticism of the memorial by some German liberals. On February 4, 1998, eighteen prominent intellectuals and scholars with impeccable liberal credentials, including Günter Grass and Marion Gräfin Donhoff, expressed concerns about a memorial devoted only to the murdered Jews without mentioning other victims of Nazi racism. They concluded that "an abandonment due to insight would do honor to all participants."

Younger liberal journalists and commentators criticized these views. Malte Leming, writing in the lively Berlin daily *Der Tagespiegel* on July 27, 1998 attacked the "right-wing populism of the left-wing intellectuals. . .[as having] formed an alliance with the mob." The electoral success of the

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DVU (a far-right-wing, anti-foreign party) in Sachsen-Anhalt led Schröder and Naumann to "involuntarily extend a hand to the right-wing populists." Whatever their motives, they now "sat in the same boat with the dull advocates of putting the past behind. For the brown-black milieu, this project [the memorial] had always been a thorn." In *Der Tagesspiegel* of August 11, 1998, Harald Mastenstein pointed out that the appeal for a line drawn under the past, which had been the distinctive feature of the postwar German right, was now expressed "in more elegant terms" by SPD Minister of Culture Naumann when he spoke out against the construction of the memorial. "In the dawn of the Berlin Republic," wrote Mastenstein, "a new, surprising constellation of fronts has emerged. The majority of the Christian Democratic Union, the Party of Democratic Socialism [the successor to the Socialist Unity Party in East Germany], and the Greens are in favor of the Berlin memorial, while the right-wing conservative artists of repression of the past and the power hungry left-wing trendies of the SPD are against it." In mid-August, in *Die Zeit*, I wondered what had happened to the SPD's traditions regarding the need to face the Nazi past.

Perhaps just as surprising, certainly for those whose familiarity with Kohl's views on memory stop with Bitburg and the historians' dispute of the 1980s, was the Chancellor's emphatic support for building the memorial. During the fall election campaign, Kohl was asked by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on September 17, 1998 whether he was certain that Germany needed the proposed Berlin memorial. He responded that the issue concerned "the core of our self-understanding as a nation." There was, he continued, broad agreement in parliament and in the public "that Germany. . .bears a responsibility for seeing that the memory of the Holocaust be kept alive. . .[and that] in addition to the sites of the Nazi crimes themselves and to the centers documenting these crimes, a central place of public reflection [should] be created." To further confound conventional wisdom, the cultural page of *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* repeatedly urged that the Eisenman memorial be built. Eduard Beaucamp complained in the *FAZ* of August 12, 1998 about the double standards prevailing in German intellectual and political life. "Imagine," he wrote, "that a designated conservative cultural official announced in the midst of an election: 'We are going to rebuild the old Hohenzollern castle, and will stop work on a Holocaust memorial that has been promised and discussed for ten years.' The scream about the emergence of a restoration, the awful repression [of the past], the encouragement of dangerous traditions would be indescribable. . . .Is it not worthy of a great nation," Beaucamp continued, "to immortalize. . .the deepest abyss of its history?"

Fortunately for supporters of the Berlin memorial, the chair of the commission examining the proposals, James Young, was able to convey the

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esthetic and political issues in Eisenman's design, which had been revised in response to the criticisms that followed its first unveiling. In *Der Tagesspiegel* of August 22, 1998, Young pointed out that the revised design offered no compensation for the Holocaust in art or architecture; left the visitor room to find his/her own way towards proper memory; and, through reductions in size and scope, presented the visitor with a human and humane—not at all monumentalist or overwhelming—scale and left room for text in stone that would convey basic information. The summer and fall of 1998 may have been the only time when right-of-center politicians appeared to be more supportive of the public memory of the Holocaust than the leadership of the Social Democratic Party.

In Berlin, however, the Christian Democratic Mayor, Eberhard Diepgen, consistently opposed the memorial. In September 1998, he said that he stood by his January 27, 1994 statement that Berlin must not become "the capital city of remorse." On September 3, 1998, all the members of the parliament of the city of Berlin, from the CDU, SPD, and Bündnis 90/Grünen, came out in favor of the memorial. The SPD and CDU, while supporting the memorial in principle, concluded in a joint statement that the final decision should be made by the newly elected Bundestag before the government moved to Berlin. The resolution of the Bündnis 90/Grünen criticized this postponement, arguing that "a memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe is an avowal of Germany's historic responsibility and guilt, and an expression of remorse. . . .[With a] memorial in Berlin, the city assumes its responsibility as the national capital." They went on to approve the selection of a piece of land near the Brandenburg Gate, and recalled that the debate over the memorial began in 1988. Their statement called Eisenman's revised design a "worthy representation" and then criticized the Berlin senate for postponing the decision to build. They saw it as the Berlin parliament's "duty" to support construction of the memorial in the planned central location. Over the course of the next six months, Naumann zigged and zagged and gradually changed course to support a proposal linking the memorial to a museum and library.

In this highly charged atmosphere—of a national election campaign, debates over the Berlin memorial, financial restitution for slave labor, and revelations about German banks, insurance companies, and industrial corporations—the second major chapter of the politics of memory erupted. In October 1998, German publishers awarded the prestigious Peace Prize to the novelist Martin Walser. The ceremony in the historic Paulskirche in Frankfurt-am-Main brought the honoree world-wide attention. Walser's acceptance speech, "Experiences in the Writing of a Sunday Speech," expressed resentments and views which heretofore had not been voiced within the German literary establishment. Walser was fed up with what he

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viewed as the excessive presence of "our historical burden, the eternal disgrace" in German politics and culture:

> There is not a day during which we are not confronted with it. Could it be that the intellectuals who bring the disgrace before us entertain for a second the illusion that, because they labor in the service of horrible memory, they are freed somewhat of guilt, slightly exonerated, are even for a moment closer to the victims than to the perpetrators, and experience a momentary diminution of the merciless confrontation of perpetrators and victims? I would never have thought it possible to leave the side of the accused. Sometimes, when I can't look anywhere without being attacked, I must find relief in convincing myself that a routine of accusation has emerged in the media. . . .No one who is to be taken seriously denies Auschwitz. No responsible person raises any doubt about its horror. However, when our media confront me daily with this past, I notice that something in me reacts against this continuous presentation of our disgrace. Instead of being thankful for it, I begin to look away. I would like to understand why in our century the past is presented as it never was before. When I notice that something in me reacts against it, I try to find motives for the presentation of our disgrace, and am almost happy when I discover that often the motive is no longer the idea that we are not permitted to forget—that instead it is the instrumentalization of our disgrace for contemporary purposes. There are always good and noble purposes. . . .Someone finds our means of wanting to overcome the German division regrettable, and says that in so doing we are making possible a new Auschwitz. Even the division itself, as long as it lasted, was justified by prominent intellectuals with reference to Auschwitz.

Walser then declared, "Auschwitz is not suitable as a routine for threats, a means of constant intimidation, a moral club, or even an obligatory ritual. What emerges from such ritualization has the quality of lip service. But when one says that the Germans are now a normal people, an ordinary society, one falls under suspicion." Turning to the proposed Eisenman design for the Berlin memorial, he referred disparagingly to "the cementing over of the center of the capital city with a nightmare the size of a football field" as "the monumentalization of our disgrace."

To German ears, Walser's choice of words was immediately striking. In place of the memory of crime or shame, he chose *disgrace*. He thus implied that memory of the Holocaust was more a matter of airing dirty laundry in public than a moral obligation of coming German generations. The use of the term *Erinnerungsdienst* (memory service) had unmistakable echoes of

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the Nazi term *Arbeitsdienst* (labor service) or *Wehrdienst* (military service). He also cast aspersions on the motives of those (unnamed) postwar Germans who had spoken publicly in favor of remembering Nazi crimes. Rather than being motivated by ethical concerns, their real desire was to escape identification with the perpetrators and join the ranks of the blessed victims. He was no more specific when he referred to a "continuous presentation of our disgrace" in the media, as if it were impossible to turn on the television or read the papers in Germany without being bombarded with stories about the Holocaust. As the Communists in East Germany and the far right in the Federal Republic had argued for years, the real motive of Holocaust memory lay in its use for contemporary political purposes. In other words, the memory of Auschwitz was a form of emotional and political blackmail and extortion, wielded to attain gains through the presentation of past victimization.

Walser did not specify who or what would benefit from such efforts. But the chip on his shoulder was unmistakable. From listening to him, one might have thought that the memory of the Holocaust had in fact been mobilized to prevent German unification and preserve the East German "anti-fascist" regime, and that such memory had been imposed from outside by unnamed persons and institutions with Germany's worst interests at heart. One might conclude that there had been no indigenous postwar German tradition of public memory of Nazi crimes against the Jews and others. The memory of Auschwitz, far from being a moral obligation, needed to redeem the nation's honor, or building a just democracy was a "moral club" wielded by unnamed sources whose intent was to harm postwar Germany. If such memory had any legitimate moral impulse or impact, Walser did not mention it. The proposed Berlin memorial thus was only the latest example of the efforts by unnamed persons to publicize Germany's disgrace and thus harm the nation.

Walser's speech was greeted by the assembled elite of German publishing and letters with prolonged applause. There were no angry interruptions from the audience, nor did any of the prominent figures in attendance criticize him in the press—even though Walser was clearly playing with the fires of nationalism and anti-Semitism. With the exception of one public figure, the articulate elite found itself at a loss for words. The exception was the President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Ignatz Bubis.

November 9 is a remarkable anniversary in twentieth-century German history. It marks the anniversary of the beginning of the Revolution of 1918-19, the anti-Jewish pogrom of 1938, and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. In today's Germany, the anti-Jewish pogrom occupies center stage in national ceremonies. In Berlin, with the chancellor and Federal

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President in attendance, Bubis responded to Walser in a talk entitled "He who speaks about disgrace." The full text was printed in the *Feuilliton* section of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. He did not mince words: "Martin Walser's is the most recent effort to repress history and to extinguish memory." He "spoke four times about disgrace but not a single time about crime." Walser had said that he could not believe that German citizens in Rostock would have encouraged those who violently attacked emigrants. Bubis responded, "What Walser does not believe are facts." In his Frankfurt speech, Walser had spoken out in favor of "a culture of looking away and avoidance, and of dismissal and putting things out of mind. This was common under National Socialism. Today we must not permit ourselves to accommodate it again. . . .Whoever is not ready to face this part of history but instead opts for thinking it away or forgetting it must be made to understand that history can repeat itself."

Bubis's indignation reached a peak when he described Walser's comments on the instrumentalization of Auschwitz as nothing less than "intellectual arson":

> These are assertions which usually come from party leaders of the extreme right. Our society has become accustomed to hearing them from the right-wing extreme. However, when someone who belongs to the intellectual elite of the republic makes a similar claim, it has a wholly different significance. I know no one who refers to Frey or Deckert [both leaders of right wing parties which did surprisingly well in the spring of 1998 in regional and local elections in the former East Germany]. But certainly, the right-wing extremists will now refer to Walser.

The effect, if not intent, of Walser's speech was to make the expression of such sentiments acceptable to the intellectual and literary elite. Bubis chose the occasion of November 9 to try to prevent this from happening. He said that Walser was in effect asking that, in order not to disturb his peace of mind, we "refrain from showing films about the disgrace. . . .Since I assume that Walser assumes, as do I, that one should not speak of 'collective guilt,' I do not understand why Walser feels himself accused when he watches these films." The memory of Auschwitz was necessary for learning moral lessons but had not been, and was not, "a club." While a variety of opinions about the proposed Holocaust memorial in Berlin were plausible, including outright opposition, Walser had gone too far in labeling the Eisenman design "a nightmare," or calling it a "monumentalization of disgrace": "The shame was monumental and will not be

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monumentalized for the first time by a memorial. These sections of his speech are unworthy of a bearer of the Peace Prize."

For the past decade, Bubis's has been a clear voice opposing the nationalist intellectuals, journalists, and politicians who hoped that unification would mean the end of what they denounced as the humiliating West German tradition of public memory of the Holocaust. With that in mind, he commented that the tone and content of Walser's denunciation of the Holocaust memorial was indicative of "intellectual nationalism" and was "not free of undertones of anti-Semitism." He was particularly irritated that so few members of Germany's establishment had taken Walser on, or had criticized Bubis for doing so. It seemed as if Walser had only "said what most thought." Bubis too wanted Germany to become a normal country, but the demand for normality should mean that Jews again could live there and be welcome. Normality, however, "cannot mean the repression of memory, or the need to live with new anti-Semites and a new racism as expressed by right-wing extremists." He concluded that "we owe it to the victims of the Shoah not to forget them! Whoever forgets them kills them one more time." The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* as well as German television arranged subsequent meetings between Bubis and Walser. In one of these conversations, Bubis retracted the phrase "intellectual arsonist," but his efforts at reaching some common ground were one-sided. Walser retracted nothing, played the part of the wounded party, and added another argument: that the memory of the Holocaust should be individual and private; that it was not appropriate for public expression; and that public memory was not necessary and only fostered ritualized lip service.

Though Walser did express what many Germans feel—and who can be surprised that some would have such sentiments?—he did not succeed in convincing the broader political and intellectual establishment that public Holocaust memory was driven by base motives, inspired by unnamed groups hostile to Germany, and bereft of roots in Germany's own postwar political traditions. Indeed, following the reaction to their own statements, and observing the fault lines that formed around the Walser-Bubis confrontations, Schröder and Naumann gradually understood that opposition to a memorial in Berlin would be interpreted as a victory for Walser and all of those who wanted, yet again, to "finally" draw a line under that past. They understood that opposition to the memorial would be interpreted as a departure from some of the most honorable of the postwar traditions of the Social Democratic Party.

The history of the memory of the Holocaust in Germany since 1945 is also the history of repeated efforts to banish that memory from public life. As no public memory could be more awful, we can be certain that such

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efforts will continue. From its earliest days, the postwar tradition of Holocaust memory was contested, controversial, and in some quarters deeply unpopular and despised. Yet every time German politicians have sought to evade this legacy, from Bitburg to the less dramatic musings of the 1968ers on the path to power in the summer and fall of 1998, they have returned to the burdensome yet impressive legacy established by their West German predecessors and by dissident Communists whose political voices were silenced in the purges of the early 1950s. It would have been a sad irony for a Social Democratic Chancellor to break a tradition whose origins lie in the very heart of the postwar SPD.

In the spring of 1999, Schröder and Naumann expressed support for construction of the memorial. The Bundestag will vote on the project and it seems that prospects for approval are good. In the extensive debates over the memorial in Berlin, as far as I know, one point was not made. Several participants did argue in favor of including non-Jewish victims of Nazi racism. I would add that such inclusiveness would be a fitting memorial to the traditions of the German-Jewry which the Nazis destroyed, especially the creative moral tension between universal ethics and memory and the tradition of particular communities. As Nahum Goldmann's 1952 speech made apparent, this religious and cultural tradition was one of the great contributions of the German Jews. I hope that a way might be found to leave its imprint on the memorial devoted to its advocates.

Postscript: April 1999

Germany may decide to build a memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe in the same year in which it, for the first time, has engaged in military action in Europe through its participation in the NATO air campaign against Serbia. But a historic turning point has crystallized in German politics. Politicians such as Schröder and Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, who came of political age as leftists in opposition to American imperialism and who denounced NATO's nuclear deployment plans in the 1980s, have strongly supported NATO's campaign. In 1983, in debates in the Bundestag, Fischer compared Western nuclear strategy to the logic of extermination that ended in Auschwitz. In 1999, Social Democrats and parts of the Green Party have drawn the Churchillian lessons from the memory of Auschwitz which previously only German liberals and moderate conservatives drew. Whereas the West German left once argued that because of Auschwitz, Germany should not engage in military action, the generation of 1968 in power has argued that because of Auschwitz,

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Germany cannot morally refuse to entertain the possibility that it must use force to stop ethnic cleansing in the Balkans.

For years, historians have pointed out that the Holocaust, like any past event, carries not one but multiple lessons. It is only in recent months, however, that left-of-center German politicians have concluded that the memory of the Holocaust requires Germany to join its European and Atlantic partners in defending human rights, with force if necessary. The history of this remarkable transformation in the lessons drawn from the memory of the Nazi past has yet to be written. It is one of the most important developments in European politics and intellectual life in recent decades, with potentially profound and welcome implications for the preservation of peace and human rights in Europe.

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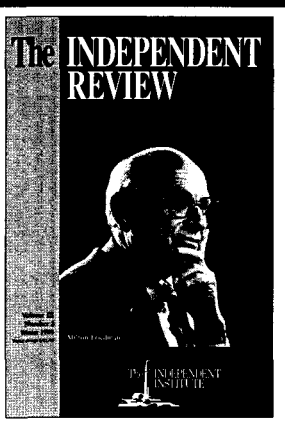

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NORMAN MANEA

The Truth as Commodity: Remarks on the Walser Debate

Of course, the Holocaust is not exclusively a German problem. While it was a crime perpetuated by the National Socialists, it has a significance that goes beyond geographical boundaries and historical fact. The question of German guilt, especially now, after unification, remains a moral obligation for this country, whose current and future generations have a right to learn about what happened in the past, but also to be assured that they themselves bear no direct responsibility for it.

Every four or five years, I offer a seminar at Bard College entitled "Literature and the Holocaust." I don't teach the course more frequently because I wish to avoid developing rhetorical routines I could fall back on in discussing this difficult topic. The first thing I tell my students is that the Holocaust is not only a Jewish tragedy, though it was above all a tragedy for the Jews. The Holocaust was a tragedy for the Germans as well, and, indeed, for all mankind.

I can understand Martin Walser's irritation. No doubt it was provoked above all by the way in which the memory of this tragedy has repeatedly been commercialized, trivialized, and even instrumentalized to various ends (including political ones). I have to say that for a Jew—above all for one who has his own memories of that horror—it is not easy to come to terms with the sensationalist notoriety that surrounds this terrible wound and shame. I see this matter rather differently than do the activists of many Jewish and non-Jewish organizations who, with the melodramatic pathos of the "good cause," invoke the catastrophe again and again, to the point of exhaustion, until all that remains is tedium.

When I arrived in the United States, I was surprised to see what a huge quantity of literature had been written about the Holocaust. Bit by bit, a full-fledged industry had come into being so as to keep the memory alive. Enough survivors were ready to participate in bizarre, theatrically earnest exorcisms which took the form of ostensibly spontaneous discussion sessions before all sorts of audiences. But I also found people who took a critical, even sarcastic approach to this mechanism of supply and demand.

On my own, I came to combine tolerance and skepticism in my attitude towards the freedom of expression enjoyed by the masses in this

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consumer democracy. That I (like Walser, presumably) would have preferred to keep alive the memory of this tragedy in a different way doesn't much change matters. After all, what would the alternative have been? If poetry did not cease to exist after Auschwitz, why should other expressions of life in its various manifestations cease, whether they belong to the "higher spheres" or are of more banal, "humble" origin? Without this "lower sphere," life could not go on. The Holocaust, after all, did not become well-known primarily through sophisticated forms of representation.

As overwhelming as it was, the Holocaust did not put an end to the course of human existence. Life went on, outside the sphere of memory, but also within and in relation to it.

Reactions to the Holocaust are no less various and contradictory than other human responses, for even this barbarism was the work of humans, not demons: it came neither from hell nor out of nothing. Some sacralized the tragedy, others denied its existence; some suffered silently from the wounds they bore, still others took it as a basis for investigation, pity, hate, revelation, revenge, despair. Unfortunately I am not religious, but I must confess that the Jewish prohibition on pronouncing the name of God or making images of him has always struck me as somehow more appropriate than the naive fairy-tale iconography of other religions. Perhaps I'd have been satisfied to have the catastrophe known as "the Holocaust" similarly enshrouded in a solemn, dignified silence. But I am not sure if there can be any solution to this dilemma.

Perhaps Samuel Beckett described the problem best. Not long after the war, in 1949, he wrote: "There is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express. . .together with the obligation to express." In the more than fifty years that have passed since it took place, the general public response to the Holocaust has changed from silence to a more and more open and insistent reappraisal, to the current state of saturation. Expression took a variety of forms: documents, memoirs, reminiscences, diaries, debates, novels, poems, films, plays, works of art. Many of these works are minor, but many are original, authentic, and striking. The substantial repercussions in the mass media, sparked less by the most significant works than by the products appealing to the general public, have kept the memory of these events alive in the public imagination.

This dilemma was brought home to me in particular by the success of *Schindler's List*. I entered the movie theater curious and apprehensive. The audience, primed by the full-blown advertising campaign, awaited the film in reverent silence. When it was over, the optimistic finale received tumultuous applause as the dead and the living came together to sing about a

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dream come true: the thousand-year-old hope which had become Israel, a home to yesterday's refugees. Surely only a very few members of the audience recognized in this didactic Hollywood cliché the very same solution that social realism had once offered for all artistic and not only artistic dilemmas in the Communist world. And just as few, apparently, were those who felt taken aback by the simple "functionality" of the picturesque characters, the spectacular improbability of their relations to one another, and the film's whole ineffably kitschy aura. (Seen from such a perspective, the hero's long melodramatic final speech to those he's saved reaches far from enviable heights.) Even fewer of the satisfied consumers who had partaken of this cheap trick were able to offer resistance to the trite, moralistic message of this commercial masterpiece by invoking their own experiences in the concentration camps.

That so few were able to resist guaranteed the film's success: a success, one could perhaps say (and this would not be the only paradox of the reality we live in), that will ensure the memory of the Holocaust for coming generations, who will have neither their own memories of this tragedy nor any reason to occupy themselves with it.

The applause in the movie theater, which gave the film's consumers the agreeable sensation of participating briefly in a victory, continued afterwards at the live ceremony in which the director, smiling among the spotlights, received his Oscar—a scene that would have deserved to be spliced into the film. In his acceptance speech, the recipient of the award reminded the audience that there were still a good three hundred thousand surviving "Holocaust experts," and encouraged schools, nursing homes, and cultural institutions to use them and popularize their sufferings. Needless to say, I was more horrified than flattered by my sudden promotion to the "endangered experts" category.

Subsequently, the award-winning director initiated the project of a vast Holocaust Archive, a laudable endeavor that well befits our time. The film's therapeutic and profitable happy ending made possible a new, philanthropic phase in our day-to-day lives, a charitable result that will, of course, in turn receive deserved applause—even in Germany. The Spielberg Archive, we are told, might even serve as a welcome substitute for the controversial Holocaust Memorial in Berlin. A good solution, many say.

Is this a good way of diverting the "moral cudgel" that has been repeatedly raised against Germany and the Germans in the trivial mass media of which Martin Walser spoke? Is this an alternative to the "monumentalizing of German shame" which Walser, perhaps rightly, so fears?

Although I understand why Walser is fed up with the media's primitive representations of the Holocaust and German guilt, it would be difficult for me not to distance myself from his position on several counts.

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If it had been a German politician giving expression to these patriotic concerns, I'd likely have been more understanding. In the case of a writer—above all one of Walser's standing—whose calling it is to scrutinize the ambiguities, the dark side of human nature, such a view of the historical "German shame" (and guilt) seems strange to me. It would have been inconceivable for a politician to write a text like "Brother Hitler," in which the great author and great German Thomas Mann displayed, as in *Doktor Faustus* or in the "Novel of a Novel," not only the good side of Germany and the Germans, of which he was so glowing an example, but also its bad side, which he debated with exemplary lucidity during the last decades of his life. I have difficulty believing that Martin Walser reads this text any differently than I do.

Assigning an individual to the permanent role of victim or perpetrator certainly entails alienation. As we know from the case of the Jews, who have always been the world's scapegoats, the assignment of such a role is unbearable. Even more grotesque is the situation in other countries. Unlike Germany, Japan has never engaged in a critical reassessment of its past, but rather has continued to hold up the terrible symbol of Hiroshima, with no mention whatever of the barbaric massacre of Chinese citizens in Nanking, where the Japanese Army engaged in horrifying acts of bestiality.

But don't we *still* have to ask ourselves whether the Holocaust has rightly come to serve as a sort of moral cudgel, regardless of what Miss Media, this frivolous, cynical, omnipresent concubine of modernity, has to say about it? And do we not have to ask ourselves where exactly the danger of "monumentalizing the shame" would lie, whether or not the guilt in question is German?

Baudelaire says that the devil's most clever trick is to convince man that he, the devil, does not exist. In our case, one might say that memory may constitute a trap if the evil in man is forgotten, the "shame" (and guilt) that ought to accompany mankind's many demonic acts. Should we just go on filling the world with monuments to "heroism," that is, with glorifying commemorations of deeds which, seen from the "other side," from the point of view of other nations (or even one's own) meant defeat, death, loss of honor and home? What does a monument in honor of a Germany victory over France mean to a Frenchman, and vice versa? And what is the meaning, for a German, of a monument to a peasant revolution in which thousands of German lives were lost at German hands? Would not this, too, be a "monumentalizing of German shame" (and guilt)? Not to mention the countless massacres that have been carried out between and within various peoples in the name of brotherly or neighborly love.

Would not, then, these "Monuments of Shame" be at least as instructive, if not even more so? Ought not the people of all nations be reminded

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again and again what man is capable of doing to man? "Ignominy," not only "Heroism." Complementary aspects of historical fate—a complementariness that ought to be unsettling, even now. Would it mean an end to the "glorious" unity of the state, or would this state finally be compelled to reconsider its role and aspire to the highest good, namely the unconditional respect of the rights of the individual, regardless of whether or not this individual lives in one's own or in some other society?

Young people in Germany should not have to bear the burden of a guilt for which they were not responsible. Yet why should they surround themselves with the aura of a heroism with which they have equally little to do? How does a monument to an ignominious event (i.e., the Holocaust) to which future generations have no direct relation, compare with a monument to the heroism of who knows what Kaiser, whose imposing statues can be seen in so many German cities? The young generation cannot relate to him, either. In terms of the indirect, difficult-to-define relationship to what one calls "history," "people," and "fate," both monuments make sense. In terms of truth, both aspects should be invoked at once—ignominy and pride, guilt and virtue.

Martin Walser seems suspicious of those German intellectuals who never tire of accusatory rhetoric where the Holocaust is concerned, believing that they will be absolved of guilt if they labor in the service of "memory"—even if it is only for a moment in which they find themselves "closer to the victims than to the perpetrators." This is certainly no grounds for irony. It is Walser's right to shield his eyes from the obsessively reiterated nightmare, although he does not specify whether it is the horror itself he is unable to bear or the manipulation of the horror to serve ends that have nothing to do with the consciousness of guilt. Both are, in a sense, understandable, and it is precisely this capacity of mine to understand which saddens me. For what we should not forget is that the only ones who no longer have a choice as to whether or not to shield their eyes are the victims themselves, who vanished from this earth with no other grave or memory than the increasingly turbulent controversies of posterity.

Germany's "shame" is also the shame of mankind. He who does not see how the Holocaust calls into question the very fabric of humanity does not, in my opinion, have any chance at all of understanding its true dimensions and meaning.

Last year the Vatican—quite rightly—announced that it had no intention of declaring itself innocent of the consequences of the age-old anti-Jewish propaganda campaign which has provided the impetus for countless fanatical crimes. The barbaric crime of the Holocaust has a certain relation, albeit not a direct one, to this past. Christian iconography functioned for centuries as more or less fanatic "mass-media" propaganda,

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which for two thousand years constantly emphasized the image of the crucifixion as an example and proof of the inextinguishable Jewish guilt—an untruth that, as one knows, nevertheless has had a mystifying power that was all but impossible to resist. A dangerous cultivation of the hatred of Jews, which paved the way for the atmosphere of crime and its denial. A millennium-old monumentalizing of shame?

I understand all too well that one can grow weary of the influence of the mass media, even if this cannot be compared with the threat of death under which Jews lived in constant fear for two thousand years.

Christ, with his Jewish parents, would have been marked for death at Auschwitz. Shouldn't the Christian world dare to see him in every one of the six million Jewish victims? We may recall the Nazi song: *"Wir wollen keine Christen sein, denn Christus war ein Judenschwein."*

How could the world of believers forget this apocalyptic violation of the most important of the Ten Commandments? Are fifty years too long a time to remember this "shame," which in the end is far more than merely shameful? Is the "moral cudgel" of the Holocaust nothing more than an excessive invention of the media's postmodern trivial machinery? And is the truth really so difficult to distinguish from its commodification?

I wonder whether we are allowed to lose sight of this distinction, even when the banalization, ritualization, and trivialization of truth proves too much for many of us. And even when appropriate solutions are just as difficult as the debate itself. The aftermath of the truth is, after all, nothing compared to the horrible truth itself—a fact which, I hope, is news to no one.

I hope that Martin Walser and his readers agree with me that we cannot give up our memories of the past—nor their burden, nor their meaning—no matter how unbearable the vulgar simplifications, how regrettable the inevitable distortions to which they are subject.

Translated by Susan Bernofsky

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LEONARD MICHAELS

Nachman At The Races

People called Nachman Nachman, as if he were a historical figure. He couldn't remember anyone ever using his first name, not even his mother. Maybe there were some kids in elementary school, but that was long ago. Now, a professor of mathematics, forty-eight years old, the name was famous among mathematicians. "Nachman," they said, and that's all, as if to use his title would diminish him. Having never been called by his first name, Nachman felt he'd never had a childhood, and he sometimes thought he was compensating for it by going to the races. It was a kind of playing, the only kind he knew—playing the horses.

Being a mathematician, it was natural that Nachman had a system for betting, but he considered it sufficient to believe his system worked. He never tested it scientifically. He was confident of its power. It even frightened him a little to think he could name the winning horse almost anytime. Occasionally, after reading the *Daily Racing Form* and tip sheets, Nachman felt tempted to name the winner–but only out of curiosity—and he'd been right often enough to believe he could be right almost always. He had no intention of exerting himself further, and actually applying his knowledge.

After looking at the forms, Nachman always walked to the ring where he studied the horses being displayed just before the race. In his eyes there was nothing more beautiful than a racehorse. The line of its neck and rump, the colors of its coat, the elegance of its slender ankles, and the light flashing along its muscles as it moved, and simply the way it moved. This collection of living elements, this singular and splendid life, this was a racehorse. Nachman knew the names of hundreds of racehorses, and he could tell you the statistics associated with their careers.

He loved everything about an afternoon at the track, from the display of the horses to the sight of them walking to the gate and then the race itself. It was a grand ritual, and it stirred the deepest sense of gratification in Nachman. He loved the trumpet, the sound of the announcer's voice, the people in the stands, and even how they lined up at the betting windows.

As for Nachman's system, it had simply come to mind one day. He wasn't trying to invent a system. It had presented itself to him. This isn't remarkable, he thought. Ideas come and go. The mind is an independent

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operator. But peculiar to Nachman's mind was its recognition of problems, and its systematic attack on the unknown. Whether he liked it or not, his mind had produced a system. It was a matter of statistics which were supplied by the *Racing Form* and various tip sheets. The statistics were based on different sorts of measurements, but Nachman didn't need a computer to reconcile one set of statistics with another. He didn't even need pencil and paper. His eyes took in the numbers, his mind adjusted the averages, and the winner emerged—almost always, it seemed, if he bothered to think about it and do the calculations.

You could say, "Nachman, if you have a system and you don't use it, you're betting against yourself." He would agree. But there would be no pleasure, no drama, no excitement in the betting. The races would be just a way to make money. Nachman cared little about money. His university salary was more than he could use. He also made money when he travelled and gave lectures. An unmarried man who lived alone, with no expensive tastes, Nachman had enough money.

He went to the races and, unthinkingly, placed his bets like someone without a system, giving himself only as much chance of winning as anyone else. Sometimes he won, sometimes he lost. This is how it should be, he thought, and he cheered and shouted with everyone else, the regular people. It was Nachman's deepest pleasure to feel like everyone else, regular, not like a freak, a mental monster, who, because of his mechanical gift for numbers, could know the winners before almost every race.

It was also Nachman's pleasure to say hello to people who recognized him as a regular at the track. He knew few of their names, but he recognized their faces and they recognized him, which made him feel at home. A black man named Horace sometimes called out to him. "Hey, Nachman, how you doing?" or "Hey, Nachman, that's a snazzy tie." Once, Horace bought Nachman a drink between races. There wasn't much to talk about, but the company feeling was good. "Let me get the next one," said Nachman. He found out that Horace was a deacon, and his church was in Oakland. He invited Nachman to attend some Sunday, and Nachman said, "I'd like that. Thank you." Soon afterwards they separated and were lost to each other in the crowd.

When a race began, Nachman was thrilled by the sight of the horses lunging out of the gate, then flowing along the rail at the far turn, and then the sight of them coming around the turn in his direction, a flurry of churning legs, hooves pounding the track, jockeys bent low to the horse's neck, whispering to them like lovers.

Since Nachman believed he could know which horse was likely to win, it took a little bit from the thrill. If you told Nachman, "You could enjoy the full thrill if you didn't let yourself read the *Racing Form* and tip

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sheets. Then you wouldn't know anything," Nachman would agree. He would even confess that he felt hypocritical, pretending that he didn't know more than the next guy. But Nachman was fascinated by the *Racing Form* and tip sheets. The information, the innocent scholarship, the whole idea of such literature was fascinating to Nachman. The whole idea was that you could publish a tremendous amount of statistical information about the horses and yet not reveal the name of the horse that would almost always win the race.

People believed too many indeterminable factors enter into a horse race. Nachman was aware of this belief, and he also knew that skeptical philosophers, including the genius Hume, said the same thing as people who bet on horse races. Regardless of statistics, the future is a mystery. You can't even be sure the sun will rise tomorrow. Nachman wished it were true. He was confident that it was mainly untrue.

A jockey could ride badly, or a horse could get sick, or a race could even be fixed, but it was mainly untrue that the winner couldn't be predicted much of the time, if not always. Nachman wasn't a man who turned his back on truth, but he only played the horses, betting intuitively, making his choices by the look of a horse, the reputation of the jockey, the prevailing odds, and other considerations, what Nachman called "deep imponderables." What a horse eats, for example, can affect performance, and who knows if a horse feels depressed? In short, Nachman had respect for the unknown. But he'd been born with a mind, and it had a great potential to know the truth. The truth was that many races were over before they started.

In today's last race, a horse named Frenchy was listed at twenty to one. Such pessimistic odds were embarrassing. Why had Frenchy been entered at all?

As usual, Nachman looked at the *Racing Form* and tip sheets, and then looked at the magnificent horses, particularly Frenchy. His color was mahogany with a strong reddish tint. He was big, with a deep chest and long legs. There was exceptional snap and vibrancy in the muscles of his flanks and shoulders. If you laid your ear against him, thought Nachman, you'd hear a humming. What a pity that such a grand horse was a loser. Even as he thought this, Nachman's system pressed into mind with strange information. Frenchy would win. Nachman hadn't wanted to know, but, willy-nilly, his system said Frenchy would win, though it was statistically impossible. Nachman knew about the horse. Frenchy was clocked at record breaking speed during workouts, but after a few early wins he'd come in fourth and fifth, out of the money. He'd lost heart for winning. This happens to a horse, Nachman believed, just as it happens to a person. There were gifted mathematicians who never achieved what was expected of

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them. High expectations, not mathematical problems, led to mental impotence. Frenchy was like them. He knew he was expected to win, so he couldn't win. Frenchy was worse than a loser.

But maybe something had changed. Maybe it was the new jockey, a Mexican named Carlos Arroyo whom the owners had brought up to the States to ride Frenchy. Arroyo was reputed to understand problem horses. Knows how to talk to them. Won a lot of races. A great jockey. You could bet on him, if not the horse, but not at twenty to one. Nachman's system couldn't handle psychological mysteries. Problems, yes. Mysteries, not likely.

Nachman must have made a mistake in the calculations, or there were subtle factors, implicit in his system, that he'd failed to notice. An honest mistake. But maybe there was something else at work. Nachman wanted Frenchy to win because the horse was beautiful. Frenchy's beauty and Nachman's yearning had entered the calculations, and come up with a sentimental assertion. Dishonest but not deplorable. Merely human.

Some of the greatest mathematicians had thought because their proofs were beautiful, they revealed the secrets of God. Nachman was moved by their visionary enthusiasm, but he wasn't mystical. Frenchy's numbers were simply wrong. His beauty was irrelevant. Nachman's yearning was irrelevant. His system had exceeded itself. He wanted to figure out why, but he couldn't do it now. The race was minutes away.

Nachman joined the line to the betting window, a twenty-dollar bill in his hand, prepared to bet on a horse named Night Flower, not Frenchy, of course. In front of Nachman stood Horace and a little girl, about nine years old. She had the same skin tone as Horace, the same eyes and mouth. Obviously, Horace's daughter. She noticed Nachman smiling at her and said, "My mom is in the hospital. That's why I'm not in school."

Horace turned and said, "How are you doing, Nachman?"

"All right. I'm sorry about your wife, Horace."

"Everything is fine. Don't listen to her."

The girl said, "He won't let me go to school because he's scared to be alone."

Horace said, "Be quiet, Camille. And tie your shoelaces." Then he looked Nachman in the eye and said, "If I stay home I'll go crazy."

"You don't have to explain. It's none of my business."

"We went to the hospital this morning."

The line moved. Horace turned away to the betting window and said, "Fifty bucks on Ladies' Man to win."

Impulsively, Nachman said, "No. Fifty bucks on Frenchy."

Horace pulled his money back, as if he'd burned his hand.

The betting agent said, "Which is it?"

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Horace said, "Give me a second, please," and then to Nachman, "Frenchy is twenty to one. You know something I don't?"

Nachman said, "Frenchy."

Nachman's voice was strong with authority, as if he knew what he was talking about. In fact, he'd never been less certain of himself but he wanted to give something to Horace. Frenchy was all he had.

Horace turned back and slid the money across the counter. Nachman placed his own bet, then joined Horace and his daughter. They walked down the steps and worked their way through the crowd to the rail. Horace didn't look at Nachman.

"You don't win, I'll give you fifty dollars," said Nachman, regretful and anxious. It became worse when Horace said, "I made the bet. I lose, I lose. Any other day but today, Nachman. Any other day."

"What?"

"I wouldn't have done it."

"You did the right thing," said Nachman, bluffing, unable to shut up. "When Frenchy wins, you'll make a thousand dollars."

"I don't need a thousand dollars."

"What do you need?"

Horace didn't answer, which made things still worse. Apparently, the race now meant a great deal to him. The race was on. Nachman had to force himself to look.

The pack bunched up coming out of the gate and stayed tight until Night Flower took the lead. Nachman couldn't see Frenchy, but he heard the announcer say Frenchy was running fifth. Nachman stared strictly at the horses. He thought he could feel Horace glance at him. Then the announcer said Frenchy was coming up through the pack, running fourth, running third. Camille began screaming, "Frenchy, Frenchy," as the horses came into the stretch. Horace placed his fists on the rail and hammered it slowly, methodically. Nachman looked at him, hoping for a connection, anticipating Horace's disappointment and maybe anger. Frenchy couldn't win. At least he looked better than usual, thought Nachman. Horace's face showed nothing, but Nachman saw terrible intensity in his fists. In the stretch, Frenchy pulled ahead fast and won by three lengths.

Nachman said, "Thank God."

Horace was grinning and shaking his head. "I don't believe it."

"Believe it. Frenchy could have won by more," said Nachman with a knowing tone.

"He won good enough."

Horace took Camille's hand, then headed off to collect his winnings. He glanced back and nodded, and his eyes said thanks to Nachman.

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Nachman went toward the exit. He'd bet intuitively on Night Flower. The horse came in last. As he entered the vast parking lot, he stopped to light a cigarette and collect himself. People streamed by on either side. Then Nachman heard his name called and saw Horace coming toward him through the crowd with Camille.

Horace said, "I don't believe I said thanks."

"Please don't mention it. I'm glad I could help."

"How'd you know he'd win?"

"A feeling."

"Don't give me that jive, Nachman. You knew something, didn't you?"

"I had a strong feeling."

"You had a strong feeling."

"Yes."

"Maybe you had a strong feeling, but I think it wasn't about a horse. It was about me. I needed a sign and you gave it to me. Maybe the Lord sent you and you don't even know that, but I appreciate what you did, and I thank you."

"Everything is going to be all right," said Nachman, overwhelmed by affection and sympathy. He wanted to hug Horace, but he hardly knew the man. Besides the affection he felt was mainly for himself. Nachman said again, "Everything is going to be all right."

"I know it is."

They shook hands, said goodbye. Nachman walked away purposively, like a soldier. You could even say he marched, exhilarated, down a long aisle of cars, feeling too much to think clearly. He'd mistrusted his system, but it had been right, which was wonderful, if somewhat unnerving. Maybe he was a better mathematician than he knew. When he got home he would take pencil and paper to the numbers, try to figure out what happened. No. Best to leave well enough alone. Nachman suddenly realized he was marching aimlessly, not purposively. He didn't remember at all where he'd parked. There were thousands of cars. He was confused, helpless as a lost child, and yet no less happy. Sooner or later his car would turn up. The feeling wasn't so bad, the feeling of being lost.

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WALTER LAQUEUR

The Fate of a Generation

One evening last August I was admitted to Hadassah Hospital, Jerusalem. The hospital was full and I was lucky to find a bed in a dark corner, sharing a room with five other patients. None was very ill or sleepy and at a late hour, after the nurses had taken the temperature, blood pressure, and glucose level for a last time, they began to tell stories from their lives. One had been in the underground in Iraq in the 1940s; another came from the neighborhood of Lublin, Poland, had been a boy at the time of the German invasion, and had spent the next few years in a so-called "family camp" in a very distant part of the Soviet Union. There was someone of vaguely French background who had spent the war years in the Foreign Legion, but it had been an existence not quite as exciting as in the Hollywood movies of the period. I also made my contribution, and the hours passed rather quickly with these stories, something like a latter-day *Arabian Nights*. There also was a younger Israeli Arab man, perhaps a village school teacher, with exquisite manners, always willing to help his neighbors, who eventually said with some envy, "What interesting lives you all have had!" We tried to persuade him, without evident success, that he may not have missed that much—and that, in any case, a price has to be paid for an eventful life.

According to very rough estimates, some 120,000 young people of Jewish origin succeeded in escaping Nazi Germany (and Austria, and other German-speaking parts of Europe) between 1933 and 1941. "Young" in this context refers to people born between roughly 1916 and 1926—old enough to remember something of the time before Hitler, but without a finished education, let alone professional training. Of them approximately one-quarter went to the United States, a quarter to Israel, another quarter to Western Europe (above all England), and yet another quarter to Latin America, Shanghai and various other places.

I estimate that at least two thousand memoirs have been written by members of this age group: books, articles, and unpublished manuscripts of various length (unpublished whether because their authors could not find a publisher, or because they were meant to be read by a small circle of relatives and friends). Come to think of it, what with the arrival of oral history, the overall number could be much higher. These memoirs include books by people well known in their respective fields, and others who are

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more or less anonymous; they include books of great sophistication dealing with affairs of state and culture, and others totally preoccupied with family outings in the olden days, school life, dogs and cats, friendships and early loves, and the escapades of Aunt Emma. They deal with the departure from Germany, the escapes, sometimes dramatic, and the vicissitudes following the arrival in the new country, such as finding a room or two in the new homeland, be it New York, Tel Aviv, or Shanghai. There were all the problems of making oneself understood in a new language, a fact which sometimes led to traumatic consequences. Mr. Schneider of Vienna, who went to work as a butler in a Scottish highland castle without knowing a word of English, was deeply shocked when the lady of the house asked him to step outside and "give the gardener a hand," which he interpreted literally (Bronka Schneider, *Exile*).

Over the years I have read hundreds of these manuscripts, published and unpublished, and found many of them of absorbing interest, however artless and repetitive, even though none of them ever made it to the best-seller list. Each story is different; yet with all their enormous individual differences, taken together they add up to a "portrait of a generation." In many ways I found the life stories of these young men and women (often mere boys and girls) more interesting than those of the older émigrés simply because the character of the older generation had been formed in Germany, and their education concluded. Some of them would acquire an astonishing facility in the new language (though most, needless to say, would not); but in most cases, even if their vocabulary were richer than that of an average Englishman or American, the language and culture would never really become theirs. Some of them had already a reputation, and all had a profession of sorts; some would make it in the new countries, others would not. But the problems facing them were quite different from those confronting the young.

Michael Blumenthal, aged thirteen at the time, described many years later the deep crisis facing his parents on the road to Shanghai: they were not comfortable being Jews, and were confused about having been Germans. They remained wedded to German culture and felt nostalgia for the comfortable ways left behind. But for him, the youngster, it was the beginning of a great adventure, new experiences, and unfamiliar, exotic sights. Despite a temporary depression, Peter Froehlich (who in a few years would change his name to Peter Gay) did not find it too difficult in his Havana waiting room to transfer his loyalties from the Berlin soccer club Hertha BSC to the New York Yankees, even though the character and the rules of the ball games in question could not have been more different.

The younger ones, in brief, were as yet at the beginning of their way in life; they were more capable of absorbing new experiences, adapting

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themselves to new circumstances (including the immense jump from soccer to baseball), and expressing themselves in a new language. Their memory was less encumbered by the recollection of "the good old days." Their roots in their country of birth had not yet become very deep, and they would find it easier to grow new roots elsewhere. Some of the older folk would talk about their beloved homeland, about a love which could not be destroyed by hatred and persecution (many of them quoted in Mark M. Anderson's recent *Hitler's Exiles*). These were not the feelings of the younger generation. Or, as Lion Feuchtwanger wrote, "Many were ashamed to be emigrants; they thought anxiously to hide it." They hoped to return as soon as it became feasible, and in the meantime, unwanted, gloomy guests, they complained and bickered. But if this is true at all (it seems to be more so for the middle-aged writers than for the average émigré) it certainly does not apply to the younger generation. Feuchtwanger also writes that the German emigration was more fragmented than any other: there were emigrants by choice and emigrants by necessity. But among the younger generation there were no emigrants who had left because of their political beliefs, because their books had been burned, or because they were on some blacklist.

The sheer number of these autobiographies is astounding if compared, for instance, to those arising from the Russian emigration after the revolution of 1917 which, after all, consisted of several million people, many of them quite literate and no strangers to expressing themselves in writing. The younger ones among them too felt a close connection with the homeland and its culture; they had interesting stories to tell, and yet the number of such accounts is much smaller.

In the case of the young German Jews it was, I feel, not so much a sense of shock which induced them to write as a feeling of duty to tell the story to their grandchildren and possibly their descendants. The accounts I have read do not reflect particular shock because of the cruelty they had witnessed; the great majority left before the outbreak of the war and the worst they had witnessed was the Kristallnacht pogrom. They were sheltered in many ways through family, school, and youth clubs, and lived in a world of their own; their parents suffered and they could not fail to notice it, but the impact was limited. It is more palpably felt among those living at the time in Austria and Czechoslovakia, simply because the persecutions that had taken six years to unfold in Germany were telescoped into as many weeks in those countries in 1938. Many had the good fortune to emigrate with their families and they were doubly sheltered, in Europe and in their new homes. Others went abroad without their next of kin, such as the youth *aliya* to Palestine (from 1935 onwards), but they were living in groups in *kibbutzim* and this too provided psychological protection. They were aged between fourteen and seventeen, and those carried in the so-called "chil-

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dren's transports," with which about ten thousand went to England in 1939, were even younger. They went without their parents; in a few cases these very young children (some of them from orphanages) lost track of their names and origins, and there were psychological problems of separation and adjustment. (As these lines are written, a moving documentary about the *Kindertransport* called *My Knees Were Jumping* is being shown in a cinema in lower Manhattan).

The families who adopted these children for a certain time had difficulties communicating with them, and *vice versa*; those who went to school in Britain were often marked as outsiders. The story of Sylvia Rogers (*Red Saint, Pink Daughter*, 1996), the daughter of Polish Communists in Berlin who had the good fortune to get a permit to go to London with her family, describes her London school years as quite miserable—and her account is by no means unique. In later life she became a political activist in her own right and the wife of a Labor cabinet minister; not everyone remained an outsider in that class-ridden English society.

As many of the memoirs were written by women as by men, and apparently more in German than in any other language. This is a little surprising because most of the authors do not (or did not) live in Germany when they wrote. Since their German education was incomplete, their mastery of the German language was not complete either, but they still seem to have felt more comfortable expressing themselves in what was after all their native language. It is interesting that there was a strong link to the German language and German culture even among the very young, where one should have least expected it. The British historian of Communist persuasion Eric Hobsbawm, who grew up in Vienna and Berlin, holder of a British passport, relates that he was far more steeped in German literature than in English and that he found London culturally much more boring than the Berlin which he had known. In some instances this might have been simply the resistance against learning a new language, but in most cases the reasons probably went deeper. Even in England, even in Palestine, there were circles of young friends of progressive German culture which continued to exist throughout the war.

There are some further obvious subdivisions.Those who did not make it but perished in extermination camps did not leave memoirs, except perhaps in a very few cases fragments of diaries. But there are autobiographies by those who survived inside Germany. They include Anita Wallfisch, the author of a particularly poignant account. She was arrested by the Gestapo in the middle of the war, having helped French prisoners to escape. At the time of the arrest she swallowed the prussic acid pill which a friend had provided, only to find that it contained not poison but some sweet substance. She had the good fortune to survive,

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playing the cello in the Auschwitz orchestra and later in Belsen. Ruth Kluger, who was younger yet, survived and became a practicing psychologist in the United States. Inge Deutschkron survived in hiding due to the political connections of her father who had been an active Social Democrat. Gad Beck survived in Berlin as a member of the Zionist *halutzic* underground, supported by the homosexual network. There are at least a dozen other accounts of young men and women who survived by assuming false identities, hiding in unlikely places some of the time, and not staying too long in any one place. Generally speaking, girls found it easier to hide than young men simply because the latter attracted more attention: every able-bodied male was supposed to be in the army. It is also true that, after 1943 when the Allied bomb attacks created havoc in many cities, records were destroyed and the hold of the Gestapo became much weaker.

Next comes the main category of the memoir-writers, the great majority who left in good time, before the outbreak of the war. Only the very lucky ones had the good fortune to migrate immediately to their country of destination. The majority went first to a West European country (where they were not welcome) and later overseas, or they went to Latin America and subsequently to the United States (or to Shanghai, and after the war to America). Many hundreds were deported from Britain at the beginning of the war as enemy aliens to Canada and Australia. Some returned to Britain, others did not. Lastly, there were those who returned to Germany after the war, some for ideological reasons—this refers above all to those who went to East Germany—and others for more pragmatic ones. They had always regarded their exile as temporary or had not been happy in their emigration. Those who went to East Germany did not fare too well because all Western *Emigranten* were suspect in the postwar years; those who went to Czechoslovakia fared worse because they were arrested in the anti-Jewish show trials. There are tragi-comic accounts of some of these unfortunates who seemed to have been in perpetual motion except when they were in prison.

The prospects of the young immigrants varied enormously from country to country. Up until 1937 more had gone to Palestine than anywhere else, but with the publication of the White Book by the mandatory government, immigration was very much reduced. Britain showed greater humanity than virtually any other country after Kristallnacht, admitting children, domestics, and thousands of others. But once they had arrived in Victoria or Waterloo Station, their fate was often not the happiest. Many were sent to small godforsaken places in the provinces and for lack of opportunity remained there forever after.

All accounts show that older children who stayed in groups did not have nearly as many difficulties of adjustment as smaller children who went

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to foster parents. Some later wrote about their love and admiration for England—the wonderful atmosphere, the quiet courtesy, the freedom to express any opinion, the sincerity and honesty of the people. But there are also many accounts of profound unhappiness and depression caused by circumstances ranging from the weather to the alien lifestyle. They believed that there was a class consciousness that could not be surmounted, and were pleased when they could emigrate again (as Dorit Whiteman writes in *The Uprooted).*

Once war broke out the males were arrested as enemy aliens under emergency regulation 18B (together with British fascists and other fifth-column candidates) and a fair number were put on ships to Australia and Canada which were torpedoed by German submarines (the case of the *Arandora Star*) and sank. Others were systematically robbed of their belongings on HMS *Dunera* on the way to Australia. Eventually they were released and even invited to join His Majesty's Forces, but only in the most lowly capacity—in the unarmed Pioneer Corps. The attitude towards them was at best condescending. The British had done their humanitarian duty by saving them, but friendliness and openness towards the immigrants was not the rule. Of course there were exceptions, those who showed great hospitality and sympathy; but in the accounts of those days such exceptions do not feature prominently.

The unpleasantness of the military bureaucracy, however, was often matched by its inefficiency and lack of coordination. And so, as the war continued, young immigrants found their way into combat and even commando units; some managed to enlist in the Royal Air Force and the Navy. Some became officers—but when they were demobilized, despite their officers' uniforms, Sam Browns, and decorations, they realized that they were still enemy aliens as far as the authorities were concerned. Having served in the armed forces, however, they did get a chance to study or to acquire a profession, though there was nothing so lavish as the G. I. Bill of Rights. But opportunities did open up, and many made good use of them as higher education became free in Britain after 1945 in the wake of sweeping social reforms.

A few of the younger generation of refugees rose to key positions in the civil service and the judiciary, but none, I believe, became a member of parliament. (The same seems to be true with regard to the immigrants in Canada and Australia.) There were certain fields in which no discrimination existed—in science, for instance, where only merit counted. Boris Chain and Hans Krebs were already in their thirties when they arrived in Britain, but Max Perutz was a mere twenty-two. All future Nobel Prize winners, they quickly became members of a community in which appointments were made and positions given in consonance with the talent and the

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promise of the candidates. In the humanities, attitudes were not always as friendly. George Mosse, at that time an undergraduate, was told in 1938 by the master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, "You people become journalists, not historians." Another field in which individuals succeeded after the war, often beyond their wildest dreams, was publishing, and the new media such as television brought openings for others.

But by and large the opportunities available to a young refugee in the United States were infinitely more promising than those in Britain. Thousands went on to the United States from Britain just before the war and after, among them some of the more enterprising, but this had been the pattern of Jewish emigration to the West even before the First World War. The idea that an immigrant could one day become Secretary of State or Commerce, let alone head of the Secret Services, would have been altogether unthinkable in Britain. American immigration policy and practice in the pre-war period was often disgraceful: the idea of children's transports was turned down. But once admitted, the immigrants were not treated as aliens or step-children. And yet despite the many disappointments, those who had gone to Britain showed much gratitude and admiration to their new homeland, and the ideal of many was to pass as true Englishmen. They took elocution lessons, sent their children to the most English of schools, and imitated English customs in a variety of ways, often comic. Many years later they established a "Thank You, Britain" fund.

When they first arrived in Britain, many refugees found it difficult to accept that in British society everyone had his or her station, and that the attempt to pass for something else was viewed with suspicion. (Even speaking English too well was frowned upon, grand dame Violet Bonham Carter, the daughter of a prime minister, once confided to me.) It is true that they had reason to be grateful—that Britain had admitted them in the first place, that Britain continued to fight in 1940 when others capitulated, and, above all perhaps, that they had known Britain in the Indian summer of its imperial glory and its finest hour. For those who came to England after the war, during the drab years of austerity, when so little remained of the erstwhile virtues and achievements, the adulation of things British by the earlier immigrants was difficult to understand. But the great admiration of British ways and customs often went well beyond these historical considerations; it evoked admiration not only among German Jews but also in those of East European extraction, from Lewis Namier to Isaiah Berlin, and of Middle Eastern origin, such as Elie Kedourie, for reasons that were political in part but went far beyond politics and deserve to be studied in detail.

If there was in Britain considerable pressure to conform, it was even greater in Palestine. Those who went to Jewish Palestine were not emigrants but *olim;* from the depths of the diaspora, they went on to a new and

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more worthwhile life, as individuals and as a group. According to the official version, it was a matter of homecoming from exile, not a desperate search for some remote corner of the world where they would find shelter.

This was a country of pioneers, of the young and very young, as Gershom Scholem wrote in a letter to his mother, persuading her to join her son in Australia rather than to emigrate to Palestine, where she would have hardly anyone to talk to. The ideal type in Palestine, not only in the *kibbutzim,* was the sabra, the native, a new type of Jew; not cosmopolitan but provincial, with few intellectual interests (certainly not in European culture or European Jewry); extroverted ("chevreman") and not self-conscious; a good agricultural worker, immensely loyal to his peer group, courageous, living modestly, with a specific sense of humor, always ready to play a prank on someone, and with his own slang (including a strong sprinkling of juicy Arabic expressions). Their idea of a fine evening was a *kumzitz,* preferably followed by folk dances, East European in origin. (A *kumzitz* was a meal out in the fields or a forest, consisting more likely than not of a sheep which had been stolen, or watermelons which had mysteriously fallen from the back of the *kibbutz* lorry). How could a fifteen-year-old boy from Germany or Austria with little or no grounding in *Ivrit* become one of this closed elite group? This was the generation which constituted the Palmach, the military elite units—the generation of 1948, who more than anyone else won the War of Independence that year.

All this was very different from what a Jewish boy or girl from Central Europe had been educated for. Some of the younger immigrants who received most of their education in Jewish Palestine did make it into the ranks of the sabras; this was, for instance, the generation of Leah Rabin, whose language was unaccented and whose appearance and behavior was that of a sabra. Yehuda Amichai (who also arrived with his extended family at a very young age) and Natan Zakh could become leading poets of their generation, but these were the exceptions, not the rule. To be a *yekke,* an immigrant from Central Europe, was not recommended in the thirties, and the younger immigrants often tried hard to escape this stereotype. But as time passed, contempt for the *yekkes* gave way in the eighties and nineties to newly discovered fondness, an appreciation of their good qualities, and, almost, to nostalgia. Poets like Amichai and Zakh would not at all dissociate themselves from their German-Jewish heritage even though they had been very young when they first arrived in Palestine.

A perusal of the memoirs written in later years by young Jews from Germany shows very different preoccupations from those of their contemporaries who went to England or America. Heavy manual labor, mainly in agriculture, often in severe climatic conditions; primitive living conditions mainly with regard to housing and food; poverty, tiredness, lack of time and

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facilities to follow their cultural interests: these were the main problems facing them. In later years, when they had become rooted in the country, many of them were enlisted for defense assignments, for organizing illegal immigration from Europe, and later yet for the foreign service of the young state of Israel.

Not all went to *kibbutzim,* and of those who had gone, not all remained members. Some continued their education and made their way in the groves of academe; Israel's nuclear program was staffed largely by young Jews from Germany, from Ernst Bergmann to Shalhevet Freyer. There were also a significant number of young German and Austrian Jews in the senior command of the early Israeli army and security services.

Fewer autobiographies were written by those who went to Palestine than by emigrants to other parts of the world; the indefatigable Teddy Kollek was one notable exception, and Ehud Avriel, also a native of Vienna, was another. What emerges from these memoirs is that most of these young people were always very busy, and that with all the material deprivations the basic mood was optimistic, at least until 1945 when the full extent of the European catastrophe became known. But there was a new wave of euphoria as the establishment of the state appeared on the agenda and as the war of independence overshadowed everything else. Broadly speaking, this lasted until the days of austerity in the 1950s, when normalcy set in. In the meantime, most of them had found their way in the country, married, and had children. They still faced problems, but living in a Jewish country, they felt no self-consciousness about being Jewish. In this respect there was no need to conform socially or culturally—their Jewish problem had been solved simply by living in Israel. They did not have to apologize or explain for being different.

Several thousand left Israel after the Second World War, not so much because they disliked the country or found life there too dangerous, but because of greater professional prospects elsewhere, or because of family ties. But the same is true with regard to many other Israelis: according to available statistics, the percentage of German Jews who left the country was no higher than the percentage of those who had come from other parts of the globe, or who had been born in Palestine.

Sixty years after the great exodus, some of the survivors in various parts of the world have gathered to commemorate and to celebrate. Others do not want to be reminded of a period in their lives which lies so far back as to be almost unreal. Just as their recollections of Germany vary, so does their interest in Judaism, and in the catastrophe which befell so many of their families and friends who, unlike them, did not escape in time. Memory is a fashionable concept among historians these days but not everyone is a historian or wants to share in the cult of memory.

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The boy or girl sixteen years of age in 1933 (or in 1939) was not an unwritten page. But the years that have passed since have decisively influenced their emotions and their judgment. Some have refused, as a matter of principle, to set foot on German soil. But more have returned for visits, and some have stayed. These include the young Communists who returned soon after the war to build (as they thought) a new and better Germany in the East. They also include a few who went with their parents to the Soviet Union and, for a while, felt that they and they alone had the good fortune to be present at the creation of a new world. This is the spirit that emanates from one of the first such accounts ever published, Wolfgang Leonhard's *Child of the Revolution* (1957), or from that of Markus Wolf (the East German spy chief), *Die Troika* (1988), written many years later. They lived to realize that their god had failed. But they are not the only disappointed old men and women of that generation. The young pioneers who went to the *kibbutzim* in the 1930s faced a life without television, air conditioning, or very often a room of their own. But there was a climate of idealism, optimism, and sacrifice which has vanished with the tremendous changes that have taken place not just in the *kibbutzim* but in Israeli society in general.

Some returned to Germany for extended visits because they became professors of German history or literature or some other German topic. But it is doubtful whether this involvement in things German will last more than one generation, as their interest is not being transmitted to their children and grandchildren.

In Israel, interest in Germany was probably less than in any other country. In his 1988 autobiography, Uri Avneri is much more concerned with Palestinian Arabs than with his German schoolmates. Many Israelis have made use of invitations from their native cities and have revisited the sites of their early years—the houses where they were born, the schools they attended (to the extent that these were still standing)—but the shock of recognition, if any, was not overwhelming; it was a matter of mild interest rather than deep nostalgia or painful trauma. They had been too young when they left to suffer deeply or to feel the loss very acutely. There was not much love, but there was not much hate either.

Since the Israeli passport is not the most convenient one internationally, thousands of Israelis have acquired a German passport in addition, as a matter of convenience rather than out of identification with the country from which they were expelled. Many of their children who were not even born in Germany have done the same. The relationship between Germany and erstwhile German Jews in Israel is clearly dictated by pragmatism rather than by emotion.

The boys and girls who left Germany after 1933 did have political convictions of sorts, but it is not surprising that in the light of their subsequent

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experiences changes have taken place. I remember a youth leader in my hometown who was so much to the right and so antagonistic to anything Jewish that in 1932 he published an advertisement in the local newspapers publicly dissociating himself from all things Jewish. He went to Latin America, made a small fortune as a mining engineer, and then disappeared from view, but as his recently published recollections show, he has become very much a man of the left and virulently anti-American. The problems of the Quechua and Aymara are definitely closer to his heart than those of his ancestors. But I also remember a friend whose sympathies were with the extreme left, who went to a Latin American country, and whose involvement with the culture of that country was so deep and his contribution in this respect so important that his picture can now be found on the stamps of his adopted country. Another became deeply involved in the culture of the Ibo in Nigeria, so much so that they made him a honorary chieftain in the end; and yet another was last heard to be in a Buddhist monastery in Sri Lanka—all of which shows that generalizations are difficult, and that roots could be grown even in places which did not seem very propitious.

There has been a single-minded preoccupation with the Holocaust among some, but also the opposite: the attempt to push it aside—not of course to deny it, but to return perhaps a little too hastily to normalcy, or perhaps to dissociate one's own fate and emotions from that of the group which was persecuted. This can be found in some of the memoirs which stress that the authors have not visited Holocaust museums or been preoccupied with the subject in any other way; it can be found even in books of history. Thus in a history of our age entitled *Age of Extremes* (Eric Hobsbawm), the reader will look in vain for an entry about the Holocaust, even though there are some perfunctory remarks about the persecution of Jews. There could be a number of reasons for such repression—political, psychological and others—and they too deserve further thought and investigation. Much is to be said in favor of not being overwhelmed and paralyzed by the horrible memories of the past; but if this process is forced, it loses conviction.

There was a time when the "need for roots" was very much stressed. And the complaint about "rootlessness" ("where do I really belong?") does appear in recent memoirs. But it is my feeling that it is less acute than it used to be. The concept of the need for roots belongs to some extent to the age prior to the invention of the airplane and the period of the mass migrations which have taken place all over the globe. It has not disappeared but it is often felt less acutely. Self-consciousness about the need for roots is for obvious reasons least felt in Israel, more in the United States, and most of all in Europe. Gad Granach, the son of one of the leading actors

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of the thirties (from *Nosferatu* to *Ninochka* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls)* went as a pioneer to Palestine; he calls his recent autobiography *Heimat Los!* (1997), but the uprooting seems not to have caused him many sleepless nights—he has become so much part of the Rehavia scene in Jerusalem that he probably would not like to live anywhere else.

Dr. Dorit Bader Whiteman, a clinical psychologist, has written about the lasting emotional consequences for the young uprooted. Her conclusions about emotional wounds suffered seem eminently sensible—for instance, that "escapees have grave doubts about mankind in an abstract sense and about the fate of the world." But the same would appear to be true with regard to all generations who lived through the Second World War, except perhaps those in the United States who were lucky and did not suffer the ravages of war, and, to a lesser degree, those in Britain. This is not to belittle the emotional consequences of being uprooted, but it should never be forgotten that the twentieth century more than any previous one was a century of expulsions and resettlement, especially in Europe and Asia, and that tens of millions of people were affected. A few memoir-writers complain that they were deprived of their youth, with all that this implies: the right to be carefree, to dream, to be irresponsible, to waste their time. True enough; but if so, they chose the wrong time to live. Those born in Europe between 1915 and 1925 were not good insurance risks in the first place and they were lucky to survive without substantial damage.

The preoccupation with the need for roots has been replaced to some extent with the fashionable debate about identity, ethnicity, ethnic group identification, self-esteem, and so on. This is a relatively recent phenomenon and it developed at the same time as multiculturalism was spreading. It is in many ways more of a second-generation problem. For when the young émigrés of 1933-39 arrived in Britain or in the United States, it seemed obvious that there was a majority society and culture, and that integration in this society was the commandment of the hour, rather than stressing their own ethnic and cultural diversity. Nevertheless, the quest for identity has been reflected in several memoirs.

Before 1933, German Jews in their majority had moved far, not just from the Jewish religion, but from interest in and identification with things Jewish. Some no longer thought of themselves as Jews, quite irrespective of whether they had officially dissociated themselves. After the Nazi rise to power, and later, under the impact of the Holocaust, there was a rediscovery of Judaism, within limits. Few memoirs fail to mention this. With this rediscovery came a new interest in family origins, and eventually the urge to write down recollections. It is doubtful whether all this amounts to a renaissance of Jewish feeling among the members of the generation on which this review has focused, let alone their children or grandchildren.

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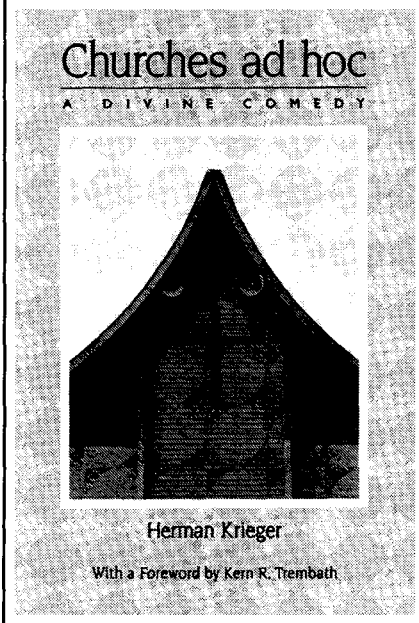
True, the pressure towards conversion is much less today than at any time in the past. Few careers have now been barred to Jews *qua* Jews: a former secretary of state was born in Germany; a former head of the CIA, in Europe; the director of the British Council, in Vienna; the former Danish minister of taxation, in Chemnitz (for a while Karl Marx Stadt); the former South African ambassador to the U.S. was born a German Jew—and the list could be made much longer.



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MILLICENT BELL

Fiction Chronicle

Damascus Gate. By Robert Stone. Houghton Mifflin. $26.00.
The Half-Life of Happiness. By John Casey. Knopf. $25.00.
The Poisonwood Bible. By Barbara Kingsolver. Harper Flamingo. $26.00.
The Reader. By Bernhard Schlink. Translated by Carol Brown Janeway. Pantheon. $21.00.
Reservation Road. By John Burnham Schwartz. Knopf. $24.00.

There are the novelists who cannot give us enough of life; they cram down our throats more than we can easily swallow, and we nearly choke on a mass of characters and scenes and intertangled plots, and on the macro-history of social movements, politics, war, revolution and economic change, as well as the micro-history of souls. They demand that we take into ourselves a whole potful of reality because this, they urge, is the only way to understand what happens. And there are novelists who elect to serve the small sample, or the distilled essence of individual relationships—just that. The writers of this second kind also claim to give us the knowledge that will explain our lives; everything we need to know is contained in the story of how a few persons feel about one another, they seem to say—all of history in the larger world is implied in a spoonful.

A novel of the first kind is Robert Stone's *Damascus Gate*. At its center there is one man, an itinerant American journalist named Christopher Lucas, who finds himself between assignments in Jerusalem in the early 1990s. He is, by profession as well as personality, an observer rather than an actor, and so he plays a role useful to the structure of novels: he is the witness whose efforts to understand his surroundings become the reader's own struggle to understand the book. Such a central consciousness has emerged in previous novels by Stone—Lucas resembles John Converse in *Dog Soldiers* (1973), Frank Holiwell in *A Flag for Sunrise* (1981), and Owen Browne in *Outerbridge Reach* (1992). But in this latest work, the recording persona who has witnessed trauma and conflict in other parts of the world is immersed in a place where no one remains for long unparticipant. Lucas himself is not a dedicated partisan of any faith or nationality or cause. He is a lapsed Catholic whose father was a Jew; he is a *mischling* who answers with embarrassed hesitation the repeated Israeli question, "Are you Jewish?" He lacks

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the fixity of identity which is so insisted upon in a country where everyone is either one thing or another. He is a distruster of affiliations who has always looked for news stories that "exposed depravity and duplicity on both sides of supposedly sacred struggles. He found such stories reassuring, an affirmation of the universal human spirit. Lucas desperately preferred almost anything to blood and soil, ancient loyalty, timeless creeds." Yet what he wants to report this time is the "Jerusalem syndrome," i.e., the way so many who come there are persons roused to states of visionary craziness whether or not they are veritable majnoon, madmen or madwomen. It is a project to challenge detachment to the utmost.

Lucas is a little shadowy, less interesting to the reader than his perceptions where there is so much to see. Though he is more intelligent, more temperate, more humane than most of those he meets, the drama of the book lies mostly outside him or simply sweeps him along. The novelist tries to give some poignancy to his anguish of disbelief (at one point he pounds desperately on the door of a closed church in sudden need of God). But he remains one of those who may be the best but who "lack all conviction," as Yeats wrote in "The Second Coming," "while the worst are full of passionate intensity." Even his relation with Sonia Barnes, the beautiful mixed-race nightclub singer from New York with whom he is in love, threads fitfully though the novel's crowded pages and ends as it began in the irreconcilability of skepticism and faith. Sonia, a convert to Sufism whose parents had been New York Communists in the thirties, remains a believer in an apocalyptic future that excludes him.

What is strongest in this ambitious novel is its rendition of the city of Jerusalem. In a stunning opening we follow Lucas after his glance at the *Jerusalem Post*: "A border policeman had been stabbed in the Nuseirat camp in the Gaza Strip but was expected to recover. Three Palestinians had been shot to death by Shin Bet hit squads, one in Rafah, two in Gaza City. *Haredim* in Jerusalem had demonstrated against the Hebrew University's archaeological dig near the Dung Gate; ancient Jewish burial sites were being uncovered. . . ." He takes a morning walk on Easter Sunday, the sixteenth day of Nisan, the day after the onset of Passover, passing through the interlaced streets into the ancient Old City, pressing through the crowds, encountering acquaintances, hearing rumors. Such itineraries repeat themselves as we meet and meet again the major characters and the many minor figures who people the novel, and, leaving Lucas's side from time to time, we follow some of them into their own lives.

It is the time of the Intifada, and the Gaza Strip is seething with skirmishes between the settlers and Palestinians. In the Jerusalem office of Dr. Pinchas Obermann, two patients meet—Raziel Melker, a gifted but precariously balanced ex-junkie jazz musician, and Adam de Kuff, a "bipolar"

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schizoid with a messianic complex. Their combination helps to fuel a thriller plot that involves God-obsessed Christians, Jews, and Arabs as well as political zealots devoted to either the perpetuity or the destruction of the Jewish state, Israeli official police, the unofficial Jewish militia bands and Palestinian hit squads, terrorist circuit riders, veterans of the fronts in Beirut and Somalia, and professional spies and adventurers, hustlers and con-men. Raziel becomes the manipulator—or John the Baptist—who promotes de Kuff's rise as a come-again Christ. With a ragtag troop of followers, they drift into the current of a plot to recover the Temple Mount and rebuild the temple of Solomon. The actual terrorists who want to blow up the existing Moslem shrines on the Mount are both Christian millenarians and Jewish fundamentalist extremists, but non-violent visionaries of various kinds are also drawn into a tightening swirl that involves drugs-for-arms swaps and murder. Lucas's wanderings take us here and there—in Gaza, by the Red Sea, in desert and mountain country and along the Mediterranean coast, and, repeatedly, into the streets of Jerusalem. Some figures appear and reappear out of the crowd, like the fanatic Irish aid-worker, Nuala Rice, who dies for her Communist faith; Janusz Zimmer, an alienated Marxist and soldier of fortune from Poland; and the shifty, anti-Semitic and anti-American English archaeologist Gordon Lestrade, who claims to be able to pinpoint exactly the location of the Holy of Holies. Lestrade is on the staff of the House of the Galilean, a "Christian study group" whose literature speaks obscurely of the need to rebuild the temple. Also attached to the House is the Reverend Theodore Ericksen, a Quiet American who eventually jumps "or is pushed" from the top of a parapet of the Old City wall. His disaffected wife, Linda, takes her naive fundamentalist certainties into various beds—and ultimately into that of the cynical Zimmer—and becomes a courier of explosives.

Damascus Gate is likely to be made into a movie, one of these days. Its structure has been influenced by the movies, especially by the suspense film, and one can even say that it is already a movie script that seems to call for the camera to give visibility to its implied scenes, to remind one of the appearances of its many characters who flash in and out of view. We have the impression of hearing dialogue almost continuously, without prose fiction's helping explanations and identifications, while a cross-cutting camera takes us back and forth to various locations, and the relation of events only gradually discloses itself. But Stone seems to have wanted to give his novel a metaphysical dimension that would not easily translate to the screen. Lucas is no religious quester, but he majored in religion in college and his unforgotten Catholic upbringing causes him to murmur "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." His research into the causes of the Jerusalem Syndrome involves him in discussions with Obermann, Lestrade, Raziel, Sonia, and others about the common qualities of the diversified religionists

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he meets and about the essentials of all faiths. He hears it stated that, as the Hasidim say, "Everything is Torah." Boning up in the library at Hebrew University, he discovers that, by adding the Hebrew letter *shin* to the Tetragrammaton, one can transform the name of God into the name of Jesus. Raziel says, "The Sufi, the Kabbalist, the *saddhu*, Francis of Assisi—it's all one." Lucas understands the yearning that drives belief in the restoration of the *tikkun*, of cosmic harmony.

But the transcendental pantheism which sustains belief in the sacredness of everything concedes to evil its own omnipresence. Lucas's reading and conversations make him consider those heretical doctrines of the Gnostics and others which explain the world we know as a residue of God's withdrawal; he is drawn to the view that the universe is something set up by a Creator who then "absconded." When he visits Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial, on the day that he goes out to the hatred and violence of Gaza, the two are forever confounded in his memory

> although he understood perfectly well that it was a cheap equivalence. Blind champions would forever turn the wheels in endless cycles of outrage and redress, an infinite round of guilt and grief. The two were utterly unconnected, because history was moronically pure, consisting entirely of singularities. Things had no moral.

John Casey's *The Half-Life of Happiness* is a book as long as *Damascus Gate*, but it is thick with a different thickness—personal life multiplied and expanded and keeping the drama of history at a distance though the context of society at large is implied. Preoccupation with the personal is not merely the author's, however. Mike Reardon and his friends are post-Vietnam liberals. They have come together as a sort of loose, extended family reminiscent of the communes of the sixties. But personal friendship has replaced the social and political hopes of earlier years. Mike's father had been an Irish Catholic New Deal politico, and after law school and the Navy, with a brief tour of duty in Vietnam, Mike became a congressional aide, only to be bored as much as fearful of "what he was becoming," a drudge in the workshop of opportunist politics. He copes with his disappointment by going into private practice, joining an old-fashioned law firm in Charlottesville, and buying a rural property on the Rivanna River, where his companions and tenants create a nest of friendship that includes Edmond and Evelyn, a nature conservationist and an animal-rights veterinarian; Bundy, a painter; Tyler and Bonnie, teachers at the university; and Ganny, a black legal colleague. Joss, Mike's wife, an experimental filmmaker, had

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grown up in Washington, too; her father, a WASP patrician who had become an admiral, also supported Roosevelt, and after his death her mother's well-run tidewater estate on Virginia's "Northern Neck" is a place of continuity for her children, a haven where wealth seems still married to seemliness and responsibility. Framing these lives is the viewpoint of the future, the perspective of Mike's and Joss's two daughters. Edith, the elder, is the novel's narrator much of the time, as she remembers the lives of her parents and the members of their circle. The novel's trajectory stretches from her own and her sister Nora's childhood to the present. A schoolteacher and an actress, now, they try to understand who their parents were.

Casey's novel is a complex, often non-chronological sequence of early and late moments along this arc of time. Whether or not they contribute to anything so old-fashioned as a "plot," these bits and pieces are intensely rendered, and the accumulation is true to the way we remember our own lives as a disorderly collection of occasions and impressions whose sequence is forgotten and whose exact significance remains unclear. In the first sixty pages or so, we begin with that day when Mike calls for his daughter at her tap class and finds that a classmate, doing "Singin' in the Rain," poked an umbrella into little Nora's eye, and she has been taken to the hospital for surgery—a crisis to which he and Joss react in their separate, characteristic ways. A long-before episode surfaces out of the period of his employment as a congressional aide, when he is asked to counteract the effect of his congressman's anti-Semitic remark about Emanuel Celler by digging up something anti-Catholic from the record of the Jewish congressman from New York. In Charlottesville, things are only less savage when his new partners explain the sociology of the genteel, conservative suburban world to which he has removed himself. They quietly let him know that his liberalism is irrelevant—though, of course, his legal keenness makes him a valued litigator, and the fact that his and Joss's fathers were friends of presidents will impress clients. Perhaps his liberal goodwill comes to him too easily, anyhow. Edith recalls Mike relating how, just out of law school and before he got his Navy commission, he did volunteer civil-rights work. His colleague, a fellow-Catholic but black, mentioned once when Mike seemed to miss some point about the nature of prejudice how the white priest in his church fastidiously administered the wafer of the mass without ever touching a black lip. It was something Mike would never have suspected. And so the episodes go. Accompanying them, like a repeated little tune, are demonstrations of Mike's irrepressible womanizing—e.g., his roving interest in Nora's pediatrician, or her dance teacher, even at the time of the eye accident. There's a hilarious masquerade party, a local arts center benefit, during which his erotic confusions multiply among the female maskers. And sounding repeatedly also are moments that

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illustrate his contradictory stiffness and super-rationalism. There is a remembered moment when first-grade Nora gets her father to admit that everyone dies. She rages at the disclosure, which he tries to soften, "So who thought this up? This is the worst rule of all!"

Plot is a meager representation of the succession of such occasions. Edith, who teaches writing, probably speaks for the author when she says, late in the book:

> I once told my brightest student about plot. First I made fun of her infatuation with Hollywood high-concept plots—nothing more than assaults on our nervous systems, and most of the characters nothing more than test-crash dummies. I told her that the proper use of plot is to apply pressure to a fully human character until she cracks open, and we get a savor of her inmost psyche. When I said this I surprised myself. What I had in the back of my mind was a clear memory of Dad and me gathering kindling. I was four. Dad picked up a stick of red cedar, which looked more or less like the other sticks. He broke it on his knee and showed me the inner vein of red. He held it up to my nose. I had no words for how it smelled. . . .I found this sort of surprising pleasure again in certain stories and poems when some piece of business would break the plain brown stick of words open to the inner red.

The marriage of Mike and Joss does develop a plot, though, as they move on into a more and more disordered time. Character, while it remains unchanged, breaks into view with new meanings. The shared dinners of the "gang" continue, and the reader may feel simply diverted by hilarious description of the occasion when the women shave off Tyler's beard—unless perceiving the de-masculinizing vengeance of the barbers. There is one illustration after another of Mike's ineffectual good nature—his awkward racial benevolence, for an example, towards Ezra, a black prizefighter with a criminal record, whom he once defended in court. Edmond and Evelyn get new jobs away from Charlottesville and move. The fun and games grow more dangerous. Bundy commits suicide. Joss's alcoholism gets worse, and she is arrested for drunk driving. Mike's stoic masculine restraint looks more and more like inertia. He asks, "How come he ended up the party of quiet resignation? The grow-old-with-me party? How come Joss got to be the one who ranted and raved?" The last time he got to be the crazy one was when he caught his finger in the hole in the cover of the box of baby wipes.

The breakup of former coherences that is most shattering to him arrives when Joss falls in love with Tyler's girlfriend, Bonnie, and the two women are involved in an electric union that makes Mike's dalliances seem trivial. An absent-minded relationship with a new-wave psychologist and

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country singer also named Bonnie accompanies his commitment to a divorce—this followed by a more serious but permanently on-and-off affair with Fiona, an outdoor enthusiast and mountain climber. But a greater distraction suddenly offers itself: Mike is asked to be a replacement Democratic candidate for the district's congressional seat. Assenting almost without thinking, he is plunged into a *Primary Colors* scenario as he campaigns with a retinue that includes a wily campaign manager who will do any lowdown thing to achieve a win. Mike loses in the end—partly because he gags at one of his manager's dirty gambits, which involves making use of little Nora as an innocent spy. The election over, Mike accepts the party's consolation prize of a judgeship.

So the many pages turn, full of incident, amusing dialogue, and small but vivid visibilities, all giving a sense of the way politics makes itself felt in local communities and conditions. Mike's accidental re-entry into the political world in which his father and Joss's had both flourished seems farcical. And yet, it offers some mending of his severance from public life. To Edith and Nora, still trying to sum up their parents, the persisting hopefulness of Mike's and Joss's lives seems part of a past time, yet amazes them. As Edith says in the novel's postscript, twenty years after, they had

> led a highly nervous life, over-talkative, over-energized, and over-extended. . . .Now their bones and skin are frailer, but their terrible exuberance still shakes them. They haven't ever quite done what they hoped. Oh, close enough. Nora's probably right that Dad has been a good judge. And Mom gets her movies in college film festivals and every once in a while on PBS. So they both keep climbing, shorter and shorter of breath.

Which prompts the reflection that, having kept company with them in this long novel, seen them through so many inconclusive occasions, the reader too, may find himself losing breath as though compelled to climb some hill without a top.

Now, Barbara Kingsolver is a writer who regards writing itself as political action. She has always thought of herself as an activist since the days in the late seventies when she was a student anti-Vietnam protester at DePauw University to the moment, in 1983, when she joined the strikers' picket line at the Phelps Dodge copper mines in Arizona. She began writing as a journalist, as many writers do, but with a bias in favor of literature as advocacy that persisted when she began to write fiction. She has related that when she first read Doris Lessing's *Children of Violence* novels she "began to understand how a person could write about the problems of the world in a

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compelling and beautiful way. And it seemed to [her] that was the most important thing [she] could ever do." All of her writing has had, indeed, a strong motive of concern with disadvantaged Americans, particularly those living in rural areas in the south and southwest. So, for example, in her second novel, *Animal Dreams* (1990), the narrator, Codi, returns to her home town of Grace, Arizona, a rural community consisting mostly of poor Hispanics and Native Americans, to help in its struggles for the better life—a mining company is spilling its liquid wastes onto the town's beautiful fruit orchards, rapacious commercial invaders threaten small business, there is growing class and racial tension (her boyfriend is a mixed Pueblo-Navajo-Apache), and in the high school where she teaches the teenage pregnancy rate is rising. Commitment to the needs of others is illustrated, meanwhile, by Codi's sister, who has gone to Nicaragua to aid the struggle against the contras. What has given special strength and value, however, to all of Kingsolver's writing since her first remarkable novel, *The Bean Trees* (1989), has been the gift which is the true secret of a D. H. Lawrence or Hemingway—an inspired hold upon the sensational aspects of life. She lets the reader share her sense of the way men and women feel as well as think, how the look of things both natural and man-made impinges on awareness. She has, in addition, the true novelist's ear for natural speech which makes the dialogue in her books rich and believable.

In the newest, most ambitious, and strangest of her books, she has continued to rely on personal memory even though her scene is the Belgian Congo in 1959. She herself went there with her parents, both medical and public health workers, at that time—just as her fictional American missionary and his wife and daughters arrive in the Congo, naively uncomprehending, a few months before Patrice Lumumba becomes Prime Minister of the new Republic and before he is assassinated with the complicity of the Eisenhower CIA. Written in the midst of today's warfare and turmoil in the region, the novel seems to reflect the optimism felt so recently with the fall of the infamous Mobutu so long sustained in Zaire by European and American support, yet ironically suggests the fragility of that optimism. As though recovering a lost paradise, Kingsolver depicts the natural beauty of "darkest Africa" where nothing was darker than its invaders and exploiters from Europe. She describes the unspoiled native villages she knew in her childhood, and to her own memories she adds research into modern historical, anthropological, and ecological studies.

But the real subject of this novel is not Africa but America. As with her previous books, *The Poisonwood Bible* is a study of Americans. It is one of those novels that belong to a genre invented by Henry James, an "international novel" that describes the moral adventure of Americans abroad. Like James's travelers to Europe, Kingsolver's visitors to Africa are given

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definition by their differences from the foreigners they meet. The Africans—who would once have been racistly called "primitive"—are really comparable, after all, to James's sophisticated Europeans who, in James's time, challenged the American visitor's sense of superiority. Nathan Price has come to convert the heathen. This fundamentalist Baptist missionary from Bethlehem, Georgia tells his congregation in the little Congo village of Kilanga, "Tata Jesus is bangala," ignorant of the fact that his statement is ambiguous to his hearers. "Bangala" in their language may mean either "precious and dear" or "poisonwood"—a noxious plant which grows in his missionary garden and gives him a painful rash. In the same garden he has planted Kentucky wonder beans he has brought from home, which, lacking pollinators, will not bear fruit. They are as irrelevant to the Congo environment as his message. He has no sense at all of the culture he wants to eradicate. Of course, he does not succeed; he becomes an object of mirth and, finally, of irritation to the villagers, and fails to adjust to the practical difficulties and dangers of life in the Congo. Eventually, he vanishes from the story, dying intransigent and half-mad in the jungle wilderness. His family of women—his wife, Orleanna, and his daughters Rachel, Leah, Adah, and Ruth May—come to terms with Africa.

It is they who narrate the story in remarkable alternating monologues. Kingsolver establishes for each a characteristic language that attains, at each return of its speaker, a complex richness. Orleanna, who begins as the submissive missionary wife who has carried packets of Betty Crocker cake mix and cans of Underwood Deviled Ham with her from America, gradually learns to understand the world around her and to reject the blind willfulness of her husband who has separated his family from their village neighbors by his self-righteousness and made their lives miserable and dangerous. Only the youngest daughter, Ruth May, young enough to learn to play with the village children, becomes a member of the local community without difficulty—yet she is sacrificed to the hostility her father has aroused when she is bitten by a deadly snake planted in her bed by a resentful witch doctor. The oldest daughter, Rachel, a frustrated teenage prom queen, is as rigid as her father in her attachment to her culture—though not to its religion but to new dresses for Easter and Breck Special Formulated Shampoo for her "platinum blonde" hair. In the end she adjusts to Africa better than any of the others not by submitting to its true nature but by finding a place for herself among the exploiters. She marries a white adventurer working for the CIA and after two more marriages is last seen running a hotel for rich tourists. Leah, on the other hand, who begins by being her father's disciple and admirer, grows gradually into a sort of Huckleberry Finn who masters the wilderness with tomboy skills and falls in love with a black schoolteacher and revolutionary. Her twin,

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Adah, a silent poet, handicapped by a brain damage which prevents her from speaking, yet marvelously aware, provides the book with some of its most eloquent pages of observation, eventually returning to America, she becomes a medical doctor specializing in the study of viral diseases.

Kingsolver's book braves a dozen difficulties that would defeat most writers. She successfully encompasses a large scene and much detail, and carries off her enterprise with bravura. Without making any banner declarations, she succeeds in putting across the contemporary theme of intercultural understanding to which she is attached. In an opposite sort of novel of two hundred small pages, Bernhard Schlink's *The Reader* tells us what seems at first a timeless love story. It is only after forty pages that we can place the period in which it transpires by the casual mention that fifteen-year-old Michael Berg has been reading in his schoolbooks about the recent German past of the Third Reich. It all begins with a day when young Michael, suddenly coming down with hepatitis, collapses, vomiting, in the street on his way home from school. A strange woman washes his face in the courtyard of her building and helps him to his own house. When, after weeks, he is well enough to go out, his mother suggests that he go back to thank his rescuer and bring her a bunch of flowers. What happens, however, is the start of a love affair. With a remarkable simplicity and immediacy, Schlink tells the familiar tale of initiatory sexual passion as though it has never been told before. The older man who is relating this experience of his youth recovers moment after moment in all their incorruptible freshness. On the visit with the flowers he glimpses the woman as she pulls on her stocking and perceives, without consciously recognizing it, that she is beautiful: "slow-flowing, graceful, seductive—a seductiveness that had nothing to do with breasts and hips and legs, but was an invitation to forget the world in the recesses of the body"—and she catches his stare. He comes again, and is asked to carry up a scuttle of coal from the cellar, dirties himself in the process, is given a bath and wrapped dry while, feeling his instant arousal, she tells him, "That's why you're here." So, the schoolboy becomes a lover who learns not only how to receive but how to give pleasure, although the woman he loves is thirty-six. She is a streetcar conductor who often works a late shift, and he soon falls into the routine of finding her at home between the end of his schoolday and his family's suppertime.

He soon feels superior to his schoolmates—and a little detached from them. He is someone with a secret life he learns to protect, successfully concealing his visits to the person who has become the center of his life, working harder at his school work to make up for his hours of joy. The older man recalls, "My days had never been so full and my life had never been so swift and so dense." Coming in to supper one time, he discovers that even his family have become part of a lost world:

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> I felt as if we were sitting together for the last time around the round table under the five-armed, five-candled brass chandelier, as if we were eating our last meal off the old plates with the green vine-leaf border, as if we would never talk to each other so intimately again. I felt as if I were saying goodbye. I was still there and already gone. I was homesick for my mother and father and my brother and sisters, and I longed to be with the woman.

There is little talk and, despite the intensification of intimacy, little growth of acquaintance in the ordinary sense between young Michael and "the woman." He knows nothing much about Frau Schmitz's past, and only after half a dozen visits does he learn that her first name is Hanna. They have fights he does not understand. She makes him angry when, impatient to see her, he boards her streetcar and she ignores him, continuing to joke with the driver. He arouses her incomprehensible fury when they take a four-day bike trip together. Having gone off to fetch breakfast while she is still asleep, he returns to find her livid, and she thrashes him with her belt. Only much later does he understand that she could not have read the note he left on the night table, and thought herself abandoned. The middle-class boy who probably has never met an illiterate person did not guess the real reason she loves to have him read to her from the classic German literature texts in his school bag—and that her shame compels her to conceal this reason. In any case, he has already begun to betray her by pretending to friends that they know him completely. Once, she comes to the public swimming pool when he is there with pals, and he glimpses her watching from a distance, but makes no sign. And then, she is gone without warning, her flat vacated, her new location unknown.

In the second half of the book the world and history enter. When Berg sees Hanna again, it is seven years later in a courtroom. He is now a law student, and he has dropped in to watch one of the many trials of rank-and-file Nazi criminals belatedly taking place. Hanna appears among the accused. She is being tried for her role as a guard in Auschwitz. As the trial progresses it becomes plain that she had taken part in the selection of prisoners to be sent to the furnaces, though she sometimes managed to give some of the younger, weaker girls another few weeks of life; it is said that she made these "favorites" read to her in the evenings. Then, when a barn in which some of the prisoners had been locked was set on fire during a bombing, she and the other guards failed to open the doors. Hanna responds to both charges—as the accused in such trials generally do—that the guards had no alternative. They had only done what they had to.

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Her own responsibility may have been a bit less than charged. Berg knows, now, that she could not have drawn up the protocols and reports she is accused of writing—though she admits to having done so—still hiding her illiteracy. He thinks of telling this to the judge on the possibility that her sentence might be mitigated. But he fails to do so. The narrator remembers how his feelings seemed "numbed" during the trial. As he gazes across the space of the court at the woman whose body was so thoroughly known to him, he feels no involvement. And it is a numbness he detects in others—even the judges. And he reflects, now, that this same numbness must have been felt, at the time, by the victims as well as the perpetrators of the horrors of the death camps. The prisoners, themselves, as survivor literature describes, must often have entered the state "in which life's functions are reduced to a minimum, behavior becomes completely selfish and indifferent to others, and gassing and burning are everyday occurrences." He observes, too, that this same numbness has overcome the generation to which he belongs. "That some few would be convicted and punished while we of the second generation were silenced by revulsion, shame and guilt—was that all that was to it now?" The story has some continuity for us to discover beyond the moment when Hanna is sentenced—a continuity in which he does not attempt to recover any intimate relation with "the woman" of his youth though he sends her tape recordings. Eventually, she learns to read, and educates herself in prison, but when she is about to be released, she hangs herself, and she leaves her savings to Holocaust victims. For Berg, the numbness remains.

John Burnham Schwartz's *Reservation Road* is another novel, finally, that seems to confine itself chiefly to the relation between two persons into whose story history-book time does not directly enter. They are linked arbitrarily by a terrible accident. Driving too fast on a dark country road, Dwight Arno strikes and kills a boy, and goes straight on without taking responsibility or being recognized. But Ethan Learner, the boy's father, is determined to identify and bring to justice this murderer, and undertakes a search for him. The men do not meet until the end of the book; yet by that time their non-relation, after the terrible moment on lonely Reservation Road, has become relation. Yet this short novel can be said to be resonant with its sense of larger reference. As search and evasion prolong themselves we come to know and understand the nature of both men, and we see them in the contexts of their separate lives, each as representative as the other of the commonplace, the familiar, the contemporary. The novel consists of alternating monologues that not only relate events but display the characters' private reflections. As a result, we see much more than the action. What is shaped as a sort of suspense thriller is also a study of the way many live whose lives contain no such melodrama.

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Ethan is on his way home after a concert with his wife and two children the night of the accident when little Emma begs for a toilet-stop. They pull up to a lonely gas station on a curve. Outside, Josh waits with his father, then wanders into the road and is killed before Ethan gets more than a glimpse of the driver of the speeding car. The driver, Dwight, is running late returning his own son to his divorced wife, Ruth, after a Red Sox game that ran into extra innings. Though he has had a good time with Sam at the ball park, he also has had more than the usual measure of a divorced parent's insecurity. Always unreferred to between father and son is an occasion both remember when he hit the boy so hard that he broke his jaw; he had gone wild when his wife told him about her affair with another man, and wheeling at her with a roundhouse swing, he caught the boy.

Like Ethan's Josh, Dwight's Sam is ten years old. The coincidence is deliberately meaningful. The separate stories of Ethan and Dwight are stories of difficult fatherhood, the separation of adult and half-grown child which seems particularly of our times. In the back seat of Dwight's car, half asleep when it jolts against Josh's body, Sam slightly bruises his head—and, as they ride on, Dwight tells him they hit a dog. The self-protecting lie is representative of the kind of parental bad faith for which both fathers are responsible. The novel opens with Ethan's unsuccessful attempt to connect with his son at the concert. Josh, musically talented, intensely reserved and intelligent, is a child who distrusts his father's blandness and repels his efforts to make light conversation. Out of his own unease, Ethan has often created mistrust; once, when Ethan tells him to swing without fear from a rope attached to a high tree-branch, Josh falls to the ground and feels deceived.

Ethan is, superficially, a very different man from Dwight. He is a gentle, reflective college professor married to an apparently contented wife who is a landscape designer. "Well don't y'all make just the perfect family of four," an envious college classmate says to Grace when she visits the Learners in their home, set in Ruth's arrangement of trees and flowers in a cushy Connecticut suburb. Dwight already belongs to the more disordered world of changing relationships and jobs. He is a lawyer suspended from practice after the beat-up of his wife and child; he has had to find employment at an old friend's small-town law office, and when we meet him he is living in an anonymous rented ranch, in a town appropriately named "Box Corner." Without any really satisfying new attachments, he clings desperately to his precarious fatherhood, enduring abrasive contacts with Ruth for the sake of Sam's visits.

Josh's death works its changes. Not only the stranger who runs him down but his own family feels guilt for his death—Ethan and Grace for not having watched him before he strayed into the road, and Emma for making them stop at the gas station in the first place. Guilt and anger make the

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mild-tempered Ethan embrace the role of sleuth-avenger, impatient with the ineffectual efforts of the police to find the killer. Grace becomes depressed, and drinks heavily. Dwight seems to change less than Ethan as weeks pass after the accident, but he cannot bring himself to confess his crime; as a lawyer he knows that his previous conviction for domestic violence will put him in jeopardy for a manslaughter conviction. He cannot, either, destroy the evidence of his crime. He rents a new car and locks his old one in his garage but leaves unremoved the bit of Josh's clothing that has stuck to the fender. It is the hidden car that causes the relation with Sam to go further down; during one of his visits, Sam impulsively presses the electronic garage-opener to take out the grill for a cookout he has been promised—only to be violently stopped and thrown to the ground, again the innocent victim of his father's violence as well as of his father's deceit.

Schwartz's strength as a novelist lies in the subtlety of this aspect of the story which explores the nuances of feeling in such incidents and exhibits character. But, as the police detective informs Ethan, hit-and-run crimes are the most difficult to solve, though the thriller form requires the novelist to ignore this stop to narrative. Schwartz contrives, with some improbability, therefore, to enable his avenger to draw closer and closer to his goal, though the regular police have failed. Coincidence must arrive to aid him, such as the fact that Ruth, who remembers the time when Sam came back with his father with a bruise on his head, is Emma's music teacher, and that Ethan gets to know her son, who is Sam—and Sam tells him about that night when his father hit a dog. When the chase reaches its conclusion, the novelist attempts a rescue into seriousness. Ethan's rage drops. Suddenly, he sees his quarry as another father who yearns to love. "Go back to your son," he says. The tone of the writing, the searching out of a moral and psychological theme has nearly redeemed the corniness.

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H. J. KAPLAN

Homage to Norman Podhoretz

EX-FRIENDS: FALLING OUT WITH ALLEN GINSBERG, LIONEL AND DIANA TRILLING, LILLIAN HELLMAN, HANNAH ARENDT, AND NORMAN MAILER. By Norman Podhoretz. The Free Press. $25.00.

"I have often said that if I wish to name-drop," says Norman Podhoretz in the opening sentence of his new book, "I have only to list my ex-friends. The remark always gets a laugh, but, in addition to being funny, it has the advantage of being true." And thus does this well-known curmudgeon go straight to the heart of his matter. Although now in his "reclusive dotage," he warns us, and no longer as "merry" as he used to be, he produces his Podhoretzian flourish, this time with a dash of melancholy, and we're off and into his latest offering, *Ex-Friends.*

It is worth noting at the outset that these memoirs, together with his earlier work in literary criticism and his remarkable performance as editor of *Commentary*, have quite filled his life and become—in their very personal approach to public issues—a distinctive and recognizable part of the American scene. Which is not to suggest that his work has assumed its final shape—on the contrary. He provides much that is new in this book, and if he reverts to some of the themes and stories we have heard before, he does so in a different key.

It's still the same partition, however, the one which came to such a crescendo in 1979—with the Cold War still on and no end in sight. At that point he was deeply worried about The Present Danger, as he called it in a pamphlet published the following year, but *Breaking Ranks* was essentially about his decision to part company with the so-called "Movement," and the effect of this move on his relations with the New York intelligentsia and his career as a critic and editor. Earlier, he had recounted his boyhood in Brooklyn, his remarkable literary training, and how he had put aside his misgivings and taken control of *Commentary*. There his mentors had been two almost legendary New York figures, Elliot Cohen and Robert Warshow, who together with Irving Kristol, Clement Greenberg, and Nathan Glazer, had already begun to realize their dream of transforming *Commentary* from an essentially Jewish organ to a significant factor in our national culture—inscribing first a sweeping movement toward the Left during that turbulent period of social and political change, with Vietnam

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increasingly concentrating our minds; and then an even more radical movement toward the Right in the following decades. In short, ever since 1967, Podhoretz has been looking at our intellectual history through the prism of his career, telling his story and ours with remarkable candor, intensity and wit—and notoriously letting the chips fall where they may.

At sixty-nine, after thirty-five embattled years, Podhoretz has now turned *Commentary* over to Neal Kozodoy, whom he chose and trained for the job—and, apart from worrying about his grandchildren's future in America and Israel, he has nothing to do presumably but cultivate his garden in East Hampton and write at the top of his bent. In *Ex-Friends*, he is remembering old passions and discovering new ones on what would appear to be a predictable trajectory. In seven striking books and hundreds of magazine pieces his work has achieved density and coherence, become part of our landscape. In *Ex-Friends*, however, the tone has mellowed—and this is palpable at the outset, in his account of how the "Family" of his friends and colleagues in New York has broken up. Without diminishing the clarity of the prose or diluting the liberal (or neo-) conservatism he defined so memorably in *Breaking Ranks*, he is striking a new note, looking back more in sorrow than in anger. Even the wretched Allen Ginsberg at his most coprophiliac ends by bemusing him rather than stirring his wrath; and, if his mood has changed, even verging on the elegiac at times, I find it hard to believe that it is merely because so many of his interlocutors, friends and ex-friends alike, are dead or departed from the New York scene. The heritage of the sixties, so-called, has hardly diminished since he published his essay on the "adversary culture" in *The Bloody Crossroads* in 1986. But the "present danger" seems less threatening, the situation in the Middle East less catastrophic, if no less deplorable; there are new and different intellectual wars raging, as always, some of them being waged by our children, but they do not seem to call our very survival into question, as they used to do; and Norman Podhoretz is too lucid not to see that all this must impart a new direction to his life's work, although the latter continues to be no more nor less than the *apologia pro vita sua* he has been constructing since he crossed the river from Brooklyn to Manhattan more than half a century ago.

The "bloody crossroads" was—in the phrase of his teacher, Lionel Trilling—"where literature and politics meet." And this continues to be his turf. But now, for the first time in years, his literary side and his personal feelings come to the fore, since—if he is ever to fill out and retouch the picture he has given us thus far—the time must be now, before it is too late. And this, among other things, is what imparts a new and moving quality to *Ex-Friends*, which should be read and meditated by anyone, friend or foe, who cares about the life of the mind in our country.

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The plot of *Ex-Friends* is laid out in its subtitle: *Falling Out with Allen Ginsberg, Lionel and Diana Trilling, Lillian Hellman, Hannah Arendt, and Norman Mailer.* Each of these familiar names evokes a rich and complicated personality with which Norman Podhoretz had to come to grips at some level, at whatever degree of friendship and intimacy or (as in the cases of Allen Ginsberg and ultimately Diana Trilling, for example, antagonism and distance) before they could "fall out" for whatever reason. This would seem on the face of it to be a recipe for a *potpourri* of essays, served with wry toast, and with only the author's nostalgia or lingering rancor for a center, but these are not just occasional essays, they are chapters in the Work, which unfolds like a legend—the archetypal tale of the youth who sets out to seek his fortune and learn the world, with nothing but his native wit and a thorough grounding in our culture to guide him. He finds the going tough in the big city, suffers reverses and disappointments, but by dint of talent and courage and perseverance he is bound not only to succeed but also to inspire us all with his example.

This is the kind of story which speaks to us most deeply because we've heard it before and keep wanting to hear it again, especially as we grow older. Personally, I am much older than Norman Podhoretz and the last thing I want to hear is a new story, if such a thing exists. It would only add to the ambient confusion and remind me that societies have a terrible tendency to fall apart; whereas this new book of his about falling out with various people ends by beautifully falling together, as part of that trajectory he has been tracing in his own way, bringing his characteristic mix of qualities to it—his ardor, his dogmatism, his humor and style—so that it continues to hold us in thrall and we remain (as we always do when we listen to a really good storyteller) at once gratified as the plot thickens and in suspense, not to say worried, about whether it will end as we wish.

Perhaps the wish is father to the thought, but the direction in which Podhoretz is moving is apparent, it seems to me, not only in the first and last chapters, "How Our 'Family' Broke Up" and "Requiem for a Lost World," but also and especially in the evocations of Lionel Trilling, who never really became an ex-friend, and Lillian Hellman, who did; and above all of Norman Mailer, who "comes alive" for me in these pages as never before—perhaps because Podhoretz has continued to feel a regretful empathy for the man whose work he now sees as having so dismally failed to keep its promise. In any event, we are constantly reminded that, while Podhoretz has learned and told us a great deal about how the world works, he has given us very little literary criticism as such since *The Bloody*

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Crossroads fifteen years ago, which included his brilliant studies of Camus, Orwell, Leavis and Henry Adams.

Not that, for the author of these studies, literary criticism has ever meant or could ever mean anything reminiscent of the New Criticism, or any other form of textual analysis excluding or scanting the social, moral, or political factors which form the living magma—so Podhoretz has always insisted—out of which literature and art are fashioned. This was the all-but-unanimous view of what he calls the Family of New York intellectuals among whom he found his earliest mentors and models—during his years of apprenticeship with the gentle Lionel Trilling at Columbia and the ferocious F. R. Leavis at Cambridge, and ever since. The Family, as it emerged from the Great Depression, was famously modernist in the arts and radical (meaning Marxist, albeit increasingly anti-Communist) in politics—a combination which immediately appealed to the young Podhoretz. He was very poor, very bright, and very Jewish; and the literature he loved not only for its own sake but also because it promised to take him so far was necessarily something more than a canon, a collection of great texts—it was a social activity, and therefore a public discourse. It would always involve conversation, not to say argument, and it would engage him so totally that there could never be any question of reducing it to aesthetic analysis or even (in the broader French conception) to *explication de texte.*

In this view of life and letters there would be nuances and variations, some of them important, but the effect of it for Norman Podhoretz was that the former has tended to eat up the latter. He has lived perforce through "interesting times," and his political passions have tended to monopolize his attention, so that his Work rarely shows him at work on contemporary literature or among the monuments of the past through which our lives are contemplated, savored and—excuse the expression—ennobled. And this is why I find this little book so entrancing. He is speaking as an insider, exercising his wit, dishing out gossip not only about the people listed in his subtitle but also about Jackie Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, Dwight Macdonald, Mary McCarthy, William Phillips, Philip Rahv, and too many others to mention here; and all the while he is finding his way back to an earlier time, when he dreamed of becoming a distinguished writer and "making it," which required first that he assimilate the great books of our language and literature, and those of other dead white European males as well, and then learn the ways and gain the esteem of those glamorous people in Manhattan. The latter were mostly Jews of Eastern European origin like himself, but—unlike himself—as disaffected with the Jewish community and its heritage as they were with the America of the depression; and of course there was a considerable sprinkling of

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WASPs and other non-Jews among them, e.g., Murray Kempton, who was the first to designate them as a "Family." They were poets, artists and intellectuals, former Communists, Trotskyists, once and future radicals, descendants or holdovers from Greenwich Village who sometimes indeed behaved like the talented, aggrieved, and self-regarding members of a quarrelsome family; but their quarrels were about literature, art, and ideas, and this passion was the one thing they had in common. It made them a rather exotic group at that time—"alienated," they liked to say, even though America was unique among the nations for having been originally founded on ideas. But since the business of our country was supposed to be business, not ideas, the New York intelligentsia—the very word was borrowed from Eastern Europe—seemed to be pretty much off in left field, as they say in Brooklyn.

By him, as Podhoretz's parents and mine might have put it, they were not off in left field. In fact, they were at the top of the lineup. All his life he has had an uncanny knack for reading where the country was headed. So, having won a scholarship to Columbia and another to Cambridge, then done his military service with our occupation forces in Germany, and had a brief look around Europe, he was not surprised when he got back to New York to find that the Family, which had been grouped largely around *Partisan Review*, *Commentary*, and two or three other "little" magazines, was already pushing outward into the wider culture. World War II had left our country in a new situation, with new responsibilities; and its business could no longer simply be business. This meant that the arguments of the New York intellectuals were no longer so remote from the concerns of ordinary Americans, and that the channels of communication—the media, the publishing houses, the universities—would be open to them as never before. So it was for Podhoretz until he wrote his first memoir, about his Brooklyn boyhood and how he had joined the Family with undeniable *brio* and effect, publishing a first book of essays, reviewing books for *The New Yorker* and other prestigious magazines, and editing an increasingly influential magazine—only to discover, when *Making It* appeared in 1967, that many if not most members of the Family took the dimmest possible view of his allegedly "vulgar" pursuit of fame and fortune.

This was a shock; and Norman Podhoretz has never quite gotten over it. Among other things it led eventually to the end of his friendship with Mailer, which had been close and important to them both. It led to a break with Jackie Kennedy, of all people, and a change of publishers, since the original one refused to bring the book out even though he had provided an advance for it. It cast a shadow over his relations with Trilling, who had warned that it would take years to live this thing down; and with *Partisan Review*, which published Mailer's attack. In short, a shambles—although

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reading the book today, I find it difficult to understand what the fuss was about.

For all that Podhoretz had been warned that *Making It* would create a scandal, if only because of its pushy way of exposing a "dirty little secret" (which wasn't one, really) to the effect that he and other Family members were not ethereal creatures and had ambitions, including material ambitions, like everyone else, he was deeply wounded by the virulence of his critics. And yet, characteristically, there was never any question of backing down; he has continued to assert the outrageous idea that success is preferable to failure and self-interest to self-immolation—propositions so obvious to ordinary people that (to paraphrase a remark he loves to quote from Orwell) only the intelligentsia could be dumb enough to deny it. Of course there is Family humor in all this, convoluted in the Yiddish manner, but at bottom Podhoretz is quite serious about it, as he has told us repeatedly, perhaps most memorably in the article he wrote on the relations of blacks and Jews after a quarrel with James Baldwin. Other things being equal, he insists, the best way to clear the air in a society like ours is to understand and openly declare our self- and group interests. This is not to reduce the moral law and human motivation to a caricature, or to exclude a concern for others, but simply to think seriously about these matters as Podhoretz must have done at the Jewish Theological Seminary where he studied at night for five years (while simultaneously attending Columbia by day). "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" said Rabbi Hillel—the same Hillel who taught that the essence of Torah, the commandment which included all the commandments, was to deal with our neighbors as we would be dealt with. The New York intellectuals who gave Podhoretz such a hard time over *Making It* had (like me) little Torah and less Talmud. They were the intelligentsia—defined, he liked to say at that time, as "people who live by, for, and off ideas."

The quotation, he tells us, is from one of many ex-friends who figure here in subordinate roles, the sociologist Nathan Glazer, a member of the brilliant pleiad who worked for Elliot Cohen's *Commentary* in the early days—including staff members like Clement Greenberg, Robert Warshow, and Irving Kristol; and contributors like Harold Rosenberg, Hannah Arendt, Leslie Fiedler, Sidney Hook, Alfred Kazin, Saul Bellow, Isaac Rosenfeld, Mary McCarthy, and others also destined to play a role in the culture wars which, having begun in the thirties, would go through phase after phase in the ensuing decades, now smoldering, now flaring up again, with new combatants to replace the fallen from year to year, and the battlefield shifting from New York and Washington to the entire country and then to the rest of the world. This will help to explain why, although he lives now in "reclusive dotage," or so he claims, a French publisher recently

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quizzed me earnestly about his *position* with respect to our current distempers in Washington. Like Raymond Aron, he has been—from the Cold War through Vietnam and civil rights to Bill Clinton's sex life—a *spectateur engagé* of our foreign and domestic problems; and these have preoccupied people everywhere, not merely because of our sheer bulk and power as a nation but also because they involved ideas articulated by the friends and ex-friends of Norman Podhoretz.

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Remarks are not literature, as Gertrude Stein remarked to Ernest Hemingway; but this book with its beautifully textured prose is so enlivened by great *obiter dicta*—instant portraits, vignettes, jokes, insights into the way the world works, the sort of stuff a reviewer knows he will never have room for but jots down in his reading notes anyway because it is so striking, sharp, funny, or wise—that one is reminded that our oracular Gertrude often talked through her hat. Literature is not only poetry and fiction, or some other as yet uninvented form of art, as she and her coterie might have wished. It is also (for example) Montaigne. My father's house has many mansions.

I was in Vietnam when *Making It* was published, and never caught up with the uproar it provoked until it was out of print. In any event, the scandal seemed attributable to Family inhibitions and dissensions rather than to the book itself. By the time I was back reading *Commentary* again, it had ceased, as far as I can recall, to evince a culpable infatuation with the "Movement." But how could Norman Podhoretz, without even the excuse of a love affair, have maintained so close and affectionate relationship with Lillian Hellman that he blinked at her Stalinism, her prevarications, her anti-Semitism and her Amerika-phobia—even going to the point of pretending to admire her writing and, worse, making a general principle of it? "It is a truth universally acknowledged in the literary world that the only way to remain on good terms with a writer whose work one does not admire is to pretend to admire it." So he tells us in *Ex-Friends*; a joke, alas, from which he hastens to distance himself—but the damage is done. All this makes me groan, and so does the news that he once took Staughton Lynd's views on the Cold War seriously and played a key role (with the help of ex-friend Jason Epstein) in foisting the loopy pedagogy of Paul Goodman and the "polymorphous perversity" of Norman O. Brown on the children of our country, including mine.

So it is only now, thanks to *Ex-Friends*, that I realize that we too would surely have come to a parting of the ways (perish the thought!) were it not for the fact that we lived so far from each other and were in different lines

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of work. By the time I retired from the foreign service and found a place in New York (not far from his, as it happens), the world had changed markedly, and we had practical things to do together, like making sure that Pat Moynihan and not Bella Abzug would represent us in the United States Senate. But the point is not who was right and who was wrong during the missing years, nor that it doesn't matter. Obviously it matters—but in a very different way as we grow older.

Out of our quarrels with others we make politics, said Yeats, and poetry out of our quarrels with ourselves. This may be a bit of a simplification, but it strikes me as essentially true. Having begun as a literary critic, Podhoretz became increasingly political during the *Commentary* years. He was "merrier" in the old days, he tells us in this latest book—but his poetic renditions of Ginsberg, Mailer, Trilling, Arendt, and yes, even Lillian Hellman, bring to mind another thing they say in New York: *It ain't over until it's over.* So let us hope he will continue in the vein of *Ex-Friends*—and become merry again.

SAUL STEINBERG

1914 - 1999

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SANFORD PINSKER

Who Cares If Roger Ackroyd Gets Tenure?

When Edmund Wilson, perhaps our century's most distinguished man of letters, weighed in on the subject of contemporary detective fiction for the pages of the October 14, 1945 *The New Yorker* (he found it, in a word, "disappointing"), a good many readers wrote back—some outraged that he did not like what they passionately admired while others provided reading lists they hoped would change his mind. So, Wilson (being Wilson) hunkered down with selected work by the likes of Dorothy L. Sayers, Margery Allingham, and their assorted cousins. His conclusion, under the provocative title, "Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?" (*The New Yorker*, January 20, 1945), made it clear that he remained neither amused nor prepared to say a single kind word on behalf of detective fiction:

> I had often heard people say that Dorothy Sayers wrote well, and I felt that my correspondents had been playing her as their literary ace. But, really, she does not write very well; it is simply that she is more consciously literary than most of the other detective-story writers and that she thus attracts attention in a field which is mostly on a sub-literary level. In any serious department of fiction, her writing would not appear to have any distinction at all.

Might the same things be said about the academic novel, that curious species of fiction in which eccentricity and sheer pettiness combine to give higher learning the satiric pasting it so often deserves? Or is it the case that nobody—other than professors, of course—gives a fig about whether or not Roger Ackroyd gets tenure?

Depending on how loosely one defines the "academic novel," one might argue that the general form is as old as Aristophanes's *The Clouds*. There, Socrates was held up to ridicule as a man riding through the heavens in a basket; and the label of dreamy impracticality stuck not only to him, but also to all the befuddled academic types who have followed. Caricature is, after all, the great leveler, a way of pulling down the vanities of those we fear—whether it be the cackling scientist, the loony

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psychiatrist, or the absentminded professor. Generally speaking, this is not a good formula for the richly nuanced characters we expect to meet in a first-rate novel. And if you tally up the sheer number of academic novels that have slipped down the memory hole, it is hard to escape the feeling that this is a very minor minor form. John O. Lyons' scholarly study of *The College Novel in America* (1962) confirms the suspicion by including a bibliography crowded with 215 titles, most of which nobody—with the exception of Lyons himself—has ever heard of.

At this point I find myself rather in the position of those who hectored Wilson about detective fiction. As it so happens, I am rather cool about whodunits and even less inclined to think of most sci-fi as a good late-night read, but academic novels are another matter altogether. Even cardboard characters and all too predictable turns of plot can keep me glued to the page. Why so? Because novels about academe are to college professors what bodice-rippers are to the *hoi polloi*, and this truth increases exponentially if the reader in question happens to work in an English department. Which self-respecting lit. professor hasn't thought—either out loud or in private—about knocking off a tale of the assorted troubles at his or her version of Eyesore U.? After all, the formula seems simple enough: plant a sensitive young professor in a garden of academic vipers, add a fetching student here and a soused administrator there, and *voilá,* yet another novel about higher education on the ropes.

The rub, of course, is that the few American academic novels worth rereading—one thinks of such classics as Mary McCarthy's *Groves of Academe* (1952), Randall Jarrell's *Pictures from an Institution* (1954), and Bernard Malamud's *A New Life* (1961)—were written by professional writers rather than by frustrated academics. Taken together, these novels become the standard against which subsequent forays into academe are measured.

It is, of course, quite another story across the pond, where British writers have put aspects of the academy to good use since the days of Chaucer. If his Canterbury pilgrims provided bawdiness and hypocrisy in abundant measure, the scholarly Clerk (a man who would "gladly lerne and gladly teche") is the notable exception. He earns Chaucer's sympathy as well as ours. But such admirable academics are rare, as are portraits of the university as a kinder, more gentle place. Who, for example, would Hardy's Jude be without his tragic dream of a university education? And what does his travail tell us about the caste system, then and now, known as Oxbridge? My point is that British higher education is rather like the rolled lawns on which the rich smack at croquet balls; it takes centuries for a tradition to take hold, and I suspect even longer for it to be dismantled.

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In Britain, class differences—based on bloodlines, advantage, and not least of all, place-defining speech—are a story (perhaps *the* story) that has few counterparts in America. Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954) is perhaps the watershed example of what would become a changing landscape. The new "red brick" universities not only turned higher education into an analog of national health, but also offered up delicious possibilities for talented British novelists in search of a subject. David Lodge and Malcolm Bradbury are the names that most often pop to mind—whether one's favorite happens to be Lodge's *Changing Places* (1975) or Bradbury's *Rates of Exchange* (1983). Unlike many American novelists who feel that only a mighty swing for the fences is worth the effort, their British counterparts seem less driven by market pressures and the churning ambition to write their country's version of the Great American Novel. After all, with a crowded field of *genuine* greats looking over your shoulder—Austen and Eliot, Dickens and Conrad, Joyce and Lawrence—you can turn out a "jolly good read" without worrying too much about elbowing yourself into a latter-day version of F. R. Leavis's *The Great Tradition*.

By comparison, American writers have fewer precursors to worry about. The earliest academic novel that American literary history can offer up is Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Fanshawe* (1828), a book that so romanticizes the Bowdoin of his college years that he (rightly) tried to suppress the few extant copies. Granted, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* (1920) made a splash when its insider account of Princeton as the "pleasantest country club in America" divided the world between those who knew what "petting shirts" were and smug Victorian parents who didn't; but for all the snippets of Triangle Club productions and screamingly bad undergraduate poetry that Fitzgerald shoveled into his pages, there is precious little that one could, properly, call an academic novel. At least two-thirds of its action occurs elsewhere. Wilson, Fitzgerald's classmate and "intellectual conscience" (Fitzgerald's phrase), dutifully ticked off the misspellings and the solecisms, and then declared that it nonetheless had the essential ingredient of genuine fiction: an abiding sense of *life*.

Fitzgerald was clearly onto *something,* although that something would have to wait until *The Great Gatsby* for form and content to merge seamlessly into an aesthetic whole. And when the ingredients for one of our most evocative American novels fell into place, it was the secret sharing of Nick Carraway (late of Yale) with Gatsby (never at Oxford) that gave the work its tragic resonance. In this regard, Tom Buchanan, the boorish, perennially adolescent college boy, is reduced to a minor character—good for comic relief and a certain amount of social commentary, but decidedly not where the novel's real action is.

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One can, I suppose, point toward Thomas Wolfe's pantingly romantic Eugene Gant or to others who move through college on their way to some special destiny, but the truth of the matter is that when we think of college novels we tend to think of their more permanent residents—faculty members who grumble and plot insurrections, deans (and sometimes, presidents) who dream about signing their dismissal notices, and increasingly, flashy academic superstars who liven up a moribund campus with insider gossip and the latest trends in literary theory. In short, what makes the little wheels of plot invention turn in an academic novel is academic politics, a phenomenon usually described as being particularly nasty because the stakes are so low. I prefer to think of such outbursts of pique in Conradian terms—that is, as a "fascination of the abomination"; for nothing (not ideas, not library research, and certainly not correcting student themes) provides the same adrenaline rush as efforts to humiliate one's academic enemies, or the fear that they might well return the favor.

In this sense, a novel set on a college or university campus is not unlike one that sets out to describe the day-to-day life of a professional writer. It may well be true that writers worth their salt spend an inordinate amount of time hunched over a writing desk, turning sentences around and around in an effort to get the overall rhythm and individual words down right; but this "truth" is likely to fare badly on the page and even worse on screen. Far better—and certainly more profitable—to dress the writer in a safari outfit and have him blast away at rhino (Hemingway springs to mind, but he is hardly the only example of a writer who never lets you see him sweat, much less struggle with a dangling participle) or to chronicle the drinks, drugs, and affairs that presumably come with the territory of being an American novelist.

The same argument can be applied to a novel in which professors are hardly ever seen preparing lectures, teaching classes, or grading papers. The merest hint of verisimilitude is quite enough. Why so? For much the same reason that movie audiences in the 1930s preferred escapist fare (gangster sagas or lavish musicals) to grimly realistic portrayals of the Great Depression's quotidian life. Even longtime professors will not turn pages of a novel that moves *too* realistically through the semester. Rather, they insist on excitement, be it infighting over a disputed tenure case or all-out warfare against a damnable dean, in ways that people addicted to pulp Westerns want to see shoot-outs. And, that said, nothing makes the heart of an academic beat faster than the threat of some imminent, cataclysmic change: a new building, a new curriculum, a new chairperson. The operative word, of course, is *new,* something that even the most radical professors abhor, especially if it means altering one whit of their lives (the lives of others, often large groups of others, are a very different matter). In this

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sense, most academics—and certainly most academic novels—are deeply conservative in temperament, no matter how many passionate denials are likely to pour in from those who think of themselves as world-shaking types, but who, in truth, simply want their assigned campus parking space to stay right where it is, thank you very much.

In *All the King's Men* (1946), Robert Penn Warren's meditation on politics in America, nothing quite matches the effect of a phone call that begins, "All hell's breaking loose." Jack Burden, Boss Willie Stark's resident dirt-gatherer, is usually the person on the other end of the line, and for a very long time he believes that this excitement beats finishing his dissertation in history hands-down. But I wonder about this, even as I continue to admire Penn Warren's novel—for if daily life in politics, or for that matter on the stock exchange floor is defined as an endless series of heart-pounding moments, don't they soon become commonplace, predictable, perhaps even a touch boring? Not so with academic life, where a genuine crisis is precisely what one prays for, and what college novels serve up in oversized helpings. Here, C. P. Snow's *The Masters* (1951) might be considered the template from which countless imitations have been struck: an election has been called to decide who the new Master will be, and that is quite enough to ensure a stomach-churning academic season. What might strike non-academics as a tempest in a teapot leads inexorably to enormous expenditures of fretful energy and intrigues worthy of Jacobean drama. At last, something to gossip about that has real consequence, to say nothing of juice!—that is, until Snow pulls out the rug from under his characters by making it clear that nothing has changed (or ever really would), no matter who happened to win the requisite number of votes. They have, in effect, thrown heaps of time down a black hole. Still, the excitement generated was, well, *exciting.*

At this point, let me shift the focus back to American academic novels and reconsider two hearty perennials of the form: McCarthy's *Groves of Academe* and Malamud's *A New Life*—not by way of adding more praise to that which has rightly accumulated over the decades, but rather to see how they might be tailored to fit the present moment. McCarthy's novel revolves around the efforts of Henry Mulcahy to get his contract renewed. He is, despite some publication and a Ph.D., still an instructor—somebody hanging on at Joceyln College by his fingernails. His termination notice prompts desperate action, and since Mulcahy has always been something of a *poseur,* able to spout intellectual doctrines that he does not believe in, he fixes on the widely shared myth that he is, or has been, a Communist. Playing *that* card in the age of McCarthyism, he can depend on other faculty members to rally around his cause—which, of course, is exactly what they do. No matter that strictly academic considerations are called for, or

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that Mulcahy was, in truth, never a Communist; once a certain ball gets rolling across the well-manicured lawns of a liberally-minded bastion like Jocelyn College, the momentum is hard to stop. A betting man would be smart to put the ranch and dog on Mulcahy—which makes me wonder if a contemporary counterpart of Mulcahy's, equally threatened by an impending pink slip, might consider giving over one of his classes—say, a semester before the ax is scheduled to fall—to an announcement that he can no longer keep his sexual lifestyle hidden inside the closet. Done with the same finesse that won the day for Mulcahy, I suspect that the con would work, if only because no contemporary college wants to be seen—in print, much less in a court of law—as homophobic.

Or take the curious case of *A New Life*, Malamud's novel about an idealistic young English instructor from New York City who finds himself out West and surrounded by philistines of the first water. One succeeds in Cascadia's English department by not making waves and by doing one's best to introduce engineering students to the mysteries of subject-verb agreement. As Professor Fairchild, department chairman and embodiment of its ethos, puts it:

> Our main function, as I always tells everyone we employ here, is to satisfy the needs of the professional schools on the campus with respect to written communication. In science and technology men must be taught to communicate with the strictest accuracy, therefore we teach more composition than anything else in this department. Our literature offerings aren't very diversified or extensive but they're adequate to our purpose.

The purpose, of course, is to be the consummate service department. In such a world, students get pretty much what they want—which is what they think they need—and the faculty is relieved of the pressures that come with the territory of English departments on the make: not only to publish, but also to read and think about the inextricable relationship between a literate public and a healthy democracy. Rather than a collection of individuals (who can be problematic or worse), the department Fairchild imagines in his mind's eye is low-speed, placid, and most of all, conforming: "There are two kinds of people I deplore in the teaching profession. One is the misfit who sneaks in to escape his inadequacy elsewhere and who ought to be booted out—and isn't very often; and the other is the aggressive pest whose one purpose is to upset other people's applecarts, and the more apples the better."

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Nonetheless, S. Levin, Malamud's protagonist, dreams of a richer, more intellectually attuned life than that which his colleagues dully live:

> He considered a philosophy project, to work toward a unity of Plato and Aristotle? Or maybe learn Russian and read Pushkin in the original? Or take up the guitar or recorder, Bach on both? Maybe paint weekends, not that he could weekdays. He had no heart for any of these things, then wondered if he could begin to collect material for a critical study of Melville's whale. . .but gave up the whale when he discovered it in too many critical hats. He wrote down possible other titles for a short critical essay: "The Forest as Battleground of the Spirit in Some American Novels." "Stranger as Fallen Angel in Western Fiction." "The American Ideal as Self-Created Tradition."

Levin is a product of the age of criticism, and I was probably more right than wrong when some years ago I pointed out that "one has the sinking feeling one has encountered such titles before." After all, Levin's works-in-progress (?) are awash with speculations about American guilt and Edenic innocence. He means well, but nothing he has reveries about is likely to appear in print.

What I had not bargained for, however, is the way that enemies of the humanistic spirit would erect their various tents *within* English departments—not, as was the case at Cascadia, because the claims of science and technology, of engineering and agriculture, are what butter parsnips, but because the news from the cutting edge is that literature no longer speaks to the individual heart. Indeed, when texts are properly understood, there are no authors, no readers in the old-fashioned sense of the term, no transcendent meanings. What we have instead, many literary theorists would insist, are social constructions of reality, slippery linguistic slopes, and most important of all, thinly disguised political agendas. Levin conducted his comic battle for literary value at a time when most English professors probably cheered him on from the sidelines of their respective institutions. One wonders if that would still be the case now. Not only do his projected articles seem time-locked and entirely retrograde, but his blathering on about the humanities is the stuff that fighting words are now made of. A Levin worthy of wide support would be cooking up articles such as "Otherizing the Other: Melville's Marginalized Sailors"; "Revolution and Hegemony in Hawthorne's Victimized Imagination"; and, of course, the all-purpose "Race, Class, and Gender in Damn Near Everything." In short, the age of theory can be at least as insidious to everything Levin once held dear as was the soul-shriveling atmosphere he encountered at Cascadia.

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Which brings me (at long last) to three recent novels that not only reflect certain changes in the academic landscape, but that also might constitute a short reading list for those still skeptical about the very enterprise of fictions set on university campuses: Jane Smiley's *Moo* (1995), John L'Heureux's *The Handmaid of Desire* (1996), and Richard Russo's *Straight Man* (1997). Of the group, Smiley's is probably the weakest because it tries to pack too many disparate types between one set of hard covers, and because far too much of the plot revolves around a pig secretly being fattened up under the very noses of those going about the dailiness of their daily (academic) life. Smiley's point, of course, is that large Midwestern universities are now more akin to corporations than they are to institutions of higher learning, and that generating dollars is much more important than mulling over ideas. Power is what makes this world go around, and clout comes to those who can breed a gigantic pig or use their economic savvy to exploit foreign countries. Meanwhile, the others continue to stare at the walls of their particular caves, reasonably content in their deluded lot.

Smiley is best known for *A Thousand Acres*, her lyrical evocation of Iowa farm life as it recapitulates the rhythms—and often the plot line—of *King Lear*. *Moo* is decidedly slimmer goods, but its sense of how universities currently operate is a welcome addition to the pile of fiction narrowly focused on whether or not a sad sack like Roger Ackroyd should get tenure. Near the end of Smiley's doorstopper of a novel, a provost finds himself mulling over the very question that *Moo* has explored from every possible angle—namely, "What is a university?" No clear answer comes to mind. That's the good news, as it were, because we are thus spared pontifications on his (and Smiley's) part. The bad news, of course, is that universities not only resemble corporations, but in truth have *become* them. Given shrinking budgets at the state legislature and the inertia of excess to be seen everywhere on *Moo*'s campus, something will have to give. But what? Surely not the buildings already completed or those in the planning stage; surely not programs in place or promised, much less the professors who lobby for ever-larger budgets. And most assuredly not anything remotely connected to athletic programs that provide undergraduates with the "bread and circus" of big-time football games. In short, *Moo*'s provost is in something of a pickle because he cannot pull off what corporations regularly do: downsize. Like the layers of hucksters below him, he goes along to get along, and he milks the cow until there is a good chance it will drop dead.

Moo U. may be the ironic nickname of a midwestern agriversity, but in Smiley's novel it is Earl Butz, an enormous experimental pig, who gets top billing as the symbol of everything the provost is worrying about. Butz quite literally lives an underground life at the dead center of the campus,

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with his only task being that of eating and eating yet some more, until he attains the maximum weight that is theoretically possible. Butz, of course, is clueless about what is happening to him (pigs eat whenever slop hits the trough), but he soon emerges as a lively emblem for the larger Moo U. community—its army of brain-dead undergraduates, most of the faculty, and every incompetent administrator. The only grounds for controversy about my last sentence—at least from those who have spent their lives at versions of Moo U.—is that by now "incompetent administrator" is a redundancy. "Touch this book and you touch a man," Walt Whitman's persona proudly declared in *Leaves of Grass*; meet with an administrator and you encounter an incompetent—or so Smiley would have us believe. Perhaps, but the sheer amount of reductive portraiture she packs into her pages begins to grow tiresome. In far too many cases, what we are treated to are Punch and Judy puppets dolled up in academic suiting, people who move through their paces as Smiley pulls the strings rather than pulling out the stops.

Setting her story in the 1989-90 academic year, Smiley could hardly avoid the rich material that political correctness has served up. But like most of the faculty at Moo U., she gives the subject only a passing nod. Only Chairman X, a sixties radical who continues to mourn the passing of Communism, takes the infinite variety of campus-based ideologies with any degree of seriousness: "It was well known among the citizens of the state," he tells us early on, "that the university had pots of money and that there were highly paid faculty members in every department who had once taught Marxism and now taught something called deconstruction which was only Marxism gone underground in preparation for emergence at a time of national weakness." For better or worse, this view quickly folds into the larger heap of superstitions that consign each group to the isolation of its own unquestioned viewpoint (the very last thing that happens at Moo U. is candid debate) and that makes Moo U. the anti-university it most assuredly is.

Such a world threatens to implode (that's what Ivar Harstad, Moo's provost, is really worried about), but as those who have read the novel know, Smiley's serves up an exploding pig instead. Poor Butz never had a chance because he is the plaything of a mad scientist who reminds us of nothing so much as a Frankenstein with a sharp eye on pork futures. There was a time, of course, when colleges had one or two modest goals; and claims to universality of the sort that makes hearts beat faster at Moo U. were not among them. No longer. Now, anything goes, all of which gives Harstad the night sweats:

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> Over the years, Ivar thought, everyone around the university had given free reign to his or her desires, and the institution had, with a fine, trembling responsiveness, answered, "Why not?" It had become, more than anything, a vast network of interlocking wishes, some of them modest, many of them conflicting, many of them complementary. Ivar himself resisted neither the wishes nor those who offered funds to pay for them. The most that he could say for himself was that, from time to time, he had felt obscurely uneasy.

At Moo U. there is not even the cold comfort of knowing that somebody is behind the curtain, turning the wheels that make the Wizard of Oz look omnipotent. Rather, what Smiley imagines is an organizational structure as bloated as Earl Butz and so convoluted that no manager could possibly manage it. Even the prospect of a serious fiscal crisis is short-circuited when an eccentric local farmer (who invented a planting machine) dies and leaves his patent to the university. With agri-angels like that, Moo U. will likely enjoy a long future, albeit one that will drift further and further from what a proper university ought to be.

From what William Gass calls "the heart of the heart of the country," we move to sunny California and the Stanford-like university where John L'Heureux's *The Handmaid of Desire* is set. Here, we are in the belly of the English department beast (as we were in Randall Jarrell's *Pictures from an Institution),* with all its requisite egomania and vaulting ambition. This time, however, what divides the good old boys (known as the Fools) from the with-it crowd (the Turks) is not quarrels pitting the New Criticism against the Old Scholarship, but whether there should be a literature department at all. Why not simply come clean and admit that "theory" is much more intriguing—to say nothing of career-enhancing—than going over the same old dreary texts written by dead white European males? But deconstructing a department requires votes, and what they have instead is a paralysis of the deeply divided.

Enter Olga Kominska, a visiting writer/cutting-edge theorist, who turns out to be as enigmatic as she is magically powerful. L'Heureux takes a hard, satiric look at a handful of academic feminists, would-be fiction writers, and those who think of departmental life as a chess game in which taking somebody's pawn is part of a larger plan to knock off his king. Kominska, to her credit, operates on quite other assumptions, manipulating her colleagues until something akin to rough poetic justice is meted out and the lives she has touched take on the aura of aesthetic wholeness. Mission accomplished, she flies off at the novel's end, just as she had descended from the clouds in the opening chapter. In between, of course,

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is where the action—and the academic satire—bubbles. Here, for example, is how Zachary Kurtz (his last name is hardly accidental) describes the department of his deepest dreams:

> It would include Comp Lit, Mod Thought, and all the little language departments—French, Russian, Spanish, you name it. It would take on all written documents, equally and with absolute indifference to the author's reputation or the western canon or the nature of writing itself—whether it was Flaubert's Bovary or a 1950 tax form or the label on a Campbell's soup can. . .and subject them all to the probing, thrusting, hard-breathing analysis of the latest developments in metaphilosophical trans-literary theory.

And what would this new disposition call itself? Easy—the Department of Theory and Discourse.

And here is how L'Heureux describes a meeting with the various deans hired to represent the identity politics of their respective constituencies:

> There was the gay Dean and the lesbian Dean, a sort of androgynous duo, whose clothes and hair and dress, and indeed even their features, seemed remarkably alike. They could have been a pair of very unhappy twins. Originally there had been only a single Dean for both gays and lesbians, but the lesbians had complained that this was a clear case of penile hegemony and so a lesbian Dean had been appointed, as much like the gay Dean as possible given their sexual differences. . . .
>
> The Chicana Dean was not able to attend, [President] Seton explained, because she was participating in an international forum on mariachi, past and future, and would be away for the month. The Dean of Jewish Studies would join them later.

Exaggerations all? Absolutely, but rendered with smaller amounts of grotesquery than one might imagine. The great advantage that novelists have over those who argue on either side of the "culture wars" question is that the former can use ridicule while the latter are—or at least ought to be—constrained by evidence and logical argument. In the process, L'Heureux gets to more unsettling truths in a single paragraph than most critical studies of the educational follies manage to unpack in fifteen or sixteen earnestly written chapters. No doubt this is one reason that the

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audience for novels about academe continues to increase. Those outside the ivory tower cannot have entirely escaped the national media's obsession with campus turmoil and contentiousness, and they must wonder if outbursts of intolerance or just plain foolishness have, in fact, become as much a part of contemporary college life as raccoon coats and whiffenpoof songs once were. Novelists not only give readers the illusion of an insider look, but also do it with the sugared coating that has always made a good piece of fiction preferable to a dry sociological text.

Better yet, when faced with accusations of "unfairness," novelists—unlike your garden variety scholar—can always fall back on the old-as-the-hills defense that imaginative visions have their own rules. What matters for L'Heureux is how good—which is also to say, how "true"—his writing is. And in the case of *The Handmaid of Desire*, it strikes me as very good indeed, something that Wilson could not claim for stories about who offed Roger Ackroyd. When the political storm clouds at L'Heureux's fictional university darken and an untenured faculty member is on the very edge of being sacrificed, we find ourselves caring—about an individual character more sinned against than sinning, and about the larger context in which judgments about him are made casually and without a smidgen of remorse. The poor bloke's antagonists have their eyes squarely fixed on the big picture and the main chance; and if this means axing somebody to get the department of theory they want, so be it.

If *The Handmaid of Desire* is a send-up of life at a hot academic center, Richard Russo's *Straight Man* is a saga of those who occupy a spot well down the intellectual food chain. On its best days, fictional West Central Pennsylvania University is mediocre, and perhaps not even that. As temporary chairperson of the English department, William Henry Devereaux, Jr. (son of a one-time king of American literary theory) tells it as it is when he talks to his Dean: "Mediocrity is a reasonable goal for our institution." Small wonder that Devereaux has a long-standing reputation as a pain in the ass—among administrators and fellow department members alike. He is also one of the more memorable curmudgeons I have encountered in years. Here, for example, is his "take" on faculty meetings:

> Despite having endured endless faculty meetings, I can't remember the last time anyone changed his (or her!) mind as a result of reasoned discourse. Anyone who observed us would conclude the purpose of all academic discussion was to provide the grounds for being further entrenched in our original positions.

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This from a man who teaches courses in persuasive technique, knowing full well that his students (like the faculty) want, above all else, "to avoid the ridicule of the less important, and that the cost of avoiding this grief is a studied silence."

And here is Devereaux's gut honest assessment of what has happened to himself—as well as to many of his aging contemporaries—as one decade at West Central slid uneventfully into another:

> We hadn't, any of us, intended to allow the pettiness of committee work, departmental politics, daily lesson plans, and the increasingly militant ignorance of our students let so many years slip by. And now in advancing middle age we've chosen, wisely perhaps, to be angry with each other rather than with ourselves. We preferred not to face the distinct possibility that if we'd have been made for better things, we'd have done those things.

Wry musings of this sort dot Russo's landscape, but fortunately they are forced to share floor space with some of the funniest, most outrageous plot developments this side of *Lucky Jim*. Devereaux begins his story with the wounds caused when a feminist poet of dubious distinction took exception to a stray remark he made at a department meeting and bonked him on the beezer with her spiral notebook. A loose wire puts an ugly gash on his nose, and thus we get a picture of life among short academic fuses. But even this ante goes up considerably when Devereaux threatens to kill one campus-pond duck for every day that the administration fails to provide him with the English department's annual budget. Talk about "all hell breaking loose"! The reverberations (duly covered by the local TV station) more than make up for the long uneventful stretch he had put in at West Central.

Such manufactured, fictional excitement is perhaps the nub of why novels about campus life continue to have such an intrinsic appeal, for what we get is not academic life as it actually is, but rather a heightened, highly patterned alternative. Professors devour such novels because they contain just enough to seem familiar, even as their pages move steadily into territories over the top. One way of describing the effect might be to call it comic relief; another possibility is the sense of superiority fostered in readers as the distance between a loony them and an altogether worthy *us* steadily increases.

But in the best of the breed, what readers (academics and non-academics alike) react to are the special pleasures that only a piece of well-wrought

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fiction can provide. In comic novels, timing counts for virtually everything—although it is hard to imagine a successful novel about academe that does not have an ear to the campus ground and its heart in roughly the right place. When all its cylinders are working, the result can be a human drama filled with very fallible human beings. And because ideas are—or should be—as much a part of the geography as the student center or the football stadium, these novels provide rich entertainment for those able to get the allusions and then to calculate how a given writer has used them. When, for example, a character in an Alison Lurie novel describes her teenaged children as "nasty, brutish, and tall," those in the know smile knowingly. Such community is one of the minor benefits of a college education, but one that helps us actively to resist the steady downward spiral of much that passes itself off as contemporary culture. There are, after all, many ways to deal with the shoddier aspects of mass entertainment: one is to actively take arms against it, rather like Don Quixote tilting against windmills; another is to rigorously tend one's rose garden. Yet another, and one I find enormously attractive, is the bedtime reading of certain novels. In one form or another, the books I'm thinking about ask me if I care whether or not Roger Ackroyd gets tenure; and when they're able to work on me—*really* work on me—I do, I do.

TONY TANNER

CRITIC AND CONTRIBUTOR

1935 - 1999

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PETER FILKINS

After Homer

Iliad: Book XVII

. . .So they fought on, the thud of iron
pounding the neutral air of heaven.

Meanwhile, the horses of Achilles
stood by and wept, having just seen
yet another Patroclus
laid out in the dust.

Even Zeus was moved to pity
their stony grief, two heads that seemed
to graze upon an unmarked grave,
mourning a man they'd somehow come to love.

And so they wept,
hot tears and sweat
mixing with dust, muddying their manes
as Zeus looked on, studied their pain,

And shaken, asked: "How could our kind
set you free among unhappy men
only to know, and thus to bear
more misery yet at the hands of Hector?

"It cannot happen. Into your hearts and knees
I'll breathe fresh vigor.
Troy, Achilles,
both will be amazed at your swift flight
back to the ships, the echoing tide. . . ,"

as darkness falls where the horses stand,
and the god talks on; nothing sadder than man.

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W. S. MERWIN

The Youth of Animals

They start by learning to listen
for the approach of the first time
ages before their eyes open
upon the night that holds them
younger than the night they had known
which was always whole and unseen
and then they see the first light come
to find them and when it knows them
they call out for it is the one
that they knew before they began

then what happens is the first time
and they see it all around them
as they know the song of hunger
repeating the notes of its climb
out of them and hear the answer
coming back to its only name
the way one after the other
the days come back to the same
faces where they have lived before
and find them again the first time

there was never a time before
but each day the eyes are wider
and the horizon tempts them more
whenever they see it again
one morning they wander farther
out toward it than ever before
not sure yet what they have come for
and then they come to the first time
and before they know it are gone
that one time and the time after

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Somewhere Here

There was the oak by the river
that seemed to have been old always
it was easier to picture
a time before it appeared there
with the sky still empty of it
and the crevices in the stone
without the sightless embrace
of its roots feeling for water
or even to conceive of it
in its acorn forming on some
limb held high and never seen
through the days of a summer once
with no one there yet to number
the mornings or hear the singing
than to think it had ever been
the green eyelids of two first leaves
with all that they knew inside them
still closed in a dream of the light
on its way to recognize them
or to imagine it rising
among the spring flowers slender
as a willow or believe in
the verdant ages of its youth
even the name which in time they
would give it and the place of its
shade was older than anyone
could say older than the stories
told of it and once may have been
a word for No One yet women
came and prayed to it for children
leaving gifts in its deep hollows
their children came and prayed to it
for love and to live forever

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EDWARD LOCKE

Vertical Reach

Before Asoka,
Earlier than Gilgamesh's loss,
    Before the birch of Eden catkin'd,
One out-of-moment axletree,
Like a quill
    In a hubristic scriptorium, designed
Upper as heaven, gods, holism, health,
Lower as fallen, devil, evil, villain.

When sapiens came,
The skyward-looking tossed noun grenades.
    They brush-fired their roots into reverence
And shattered the vatic *privatest* into *priest*
And, like smoke
    Of after-sex cigarettes, their princes rose
Screened from the slang of death, and wafted
Toward precious buds their bodacious prayer.

Till comes through
A summer of such fecklessness,
    Such inner shepherding fleeing
Winter and its brutally barycentric frost,
Isaac can follow
    Circuitous butterflies in sightline
Baring black-rimmed orange, and in the rims, pale eyes,
And whose flights, for who can read,

Autograph in air
The Hebrew name of what they land on next.
    So Abraham, watching Isaac aleph-mouthed,
With a voice now a silence of four wings,
Drops his knife
    To the root of a wild olive. He gapes
At the migration from treetops of a thousand monarchs
Intuitively flashing downward, blazing into a scrubby bush.

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JAMES HATCH

Leonardo

In the marketplace, doves freed from a brisk
Magician's sleeve or pocket flash in the hand.
At the level of shins and knees, gilded frames
For sale; students' copies of Old Masters,
Cleaned and stripped, reflecting in our faces
Deities, stripped. You are addressed as *maestro;*
Your careful boy walks after, cloaked and armed.
A preacher paces to the side, recounting Hell,
And after re-enacted flames, some search
The ashes (fiery globules, squirming brass),
And the quick, burned fingers, like birds' beaks, peck
For leavings: glass-plugs, hinges, gilt-melt, nails.

An ivory button and one will crow! Follow
That woman for her hideous face: the stale
Cheeks and frown-recording caliper lines,
The enameled eyes that stare and do not see:
They must be drawn; and the girlish boy who turns
Slyly away, and, drinking water from
A gargoyle spout, smiles. Water slicks stone jaws.
(He'll come to chat you up, and sing a pretty song:
Once listen, and that song will never end.)
Coins for vendors: an exchange. Doff your plumed hat,
Trouble open cages, watch the doves take wing,
Swiftly climbing to a certain level's wind.

Twenty years at study of the body (God
That have made me a worm!), gaining undertaker's
Knowledge of the places prayer begins;
Where you have seen the leak of blood into
Forbidden quarters; noted atrophy,
Dysfunction, dysmorphology; rendering
An endless, toward reportage of disaster
In the language of scientific curiosity.
A worm has made its nest where prayers most brood.
"Subject prepared in the usual manner."
The woman died young, breasts unshrivelled still;
I found the fat that clawed her heart, no mercy—

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"Head grossly normal. Abdomen distended"—
Then in the belly found the fresh germ clasping
Its knees, head humbly down. Sunlight fell
From a high window: words drift in, falling
Harmlessly on him. The broken heart's split
Tun is weighed, found wanting, drained. Twenty years
At study of the body. I have drawn it
So that the Mater Dolorosa holds
A sinewed pile of slumping bones, her son;
Coition studies where the fluids crash
In torrents, roll full, elemental floods,
And the womb is opened like a deep defile.

EDWIN M. ZIMMERMAN

Autumn Fibrillation

All night long the acorns fall.
They tap the roof, brush down
against the eaves like running mice,
then plop upon the slatted deck
hunting for a place to oak.

All night long I listen hard
but only hear the asymmetric
beats of tap, skitter, plop
that infect my heart until it goes
tap, skitter, plop all night.

I make myself a to-do list
to rectify my life: first off,
don't listen to the acorns fall;
sleep intensely all night long;
require the heart to keep its beat;

and let the summer go, assume
there will be many others.

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JACQUELINE OSHEROW

from Scattered Psalms

1. (Handiwork/Glory)

> *To the Conductor: A song of David. The heavens declare the glory of God, the firmament tells His handiwork. Day on day utters speech, night on night announces knowledge. There is no speech and there are no words without hearing their voice. (Psalm 19: 1-4)*

Dare I begin: a song of Jacqueline?
But what, from my heart of hearts, do I say?
Not that it matters, since every line
Will murmur with the heavens, sotto voce,
The knowledgeable night, the chatty day,
Their information constant, simultaneous:
The glory of God and then *His handiwork.*
Indulge them: theirs is undiluted lyric
And we can't utter speech without its voice. . . .

So how hard could it be to write a psalm?
Think of David's fairly modest territory,
There are other trees than cedar, willow, palm
(*The handiwork of God* and then *His glory*),
So many kinds of praise he couldn't know:
The ferns on their unfinished violins,
The jonquils on their giddy, frail trombones,
The aspens shaking silver tambourines,
Then yellow-gold ones, then letting go.

What did David know about such changes?
The top arc of the spectrum gone berserk?
That when some skyward barricade unhinges
Without even a breath, a noise, a spark
(*The glory of God* and then *His handiwork*),
No single earthly thing stays as it was,
Except insofar as it still sings.
Hand me an instrument of ten strings;
Everything was put on earth to praise.

The crocodile. The cheetah. Hallelujah.
The nightingale. The lynx. The albatross.

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The pine tree. Fir tree. Glacier. Hallelujah.
The hornet's diligence. The gibbon's voice.
The pale reprieve of snow. Hallelujah.
The volcano's unrestricted exultation.
The forest's lazy ease. The desert's fury.
Our own extraneous efforts at creation.
(*The handiwork of God* and then *His glory.*)

6. (Sudden *Michtam)*

> *To the Conductor, a plea to be spared from destruction,*
> *by David, a michtam. (Psalm 57: 1)*

And suddenly what I'm reading is a *michtam.*
I look at a number of English versions—
Not knowing what a *michtam* is—and every
Last one of them—some still collecting royalties—
Tells me what I'm reading is a *michtam.*
Oh, thank you, King James; thank you, Rabbi Hillel
Danzigher; thank you, translation committee
Of the Jewish Publication Society;
But couldn't you do a little better than *michtam?*

Luckily, the Hebrew-English dictionary
(The Alcalay, a three-volume set)
Through which I always travel very slowly,
Says: *epigram, aphorism, golden poem.*
And mentally I write a thank-you note
To Mr. Alcalay: My dear R. Alcalay,
If there is ever anything you need—
A letter of recommendation, a poem,
Advice on the niceties of English—
Please don't hesitate to ask me.
And another one to Rabbi Danzigher,
With a duplicate to JPS:
Though it's a bit expensive, I'd direct you
To the Alcalay Hebrew-English Dictionary
Where it says that *michtam* is a golden poem,

The very phrase my bubbe would have used
If she'd made it to a hundred-one;
In her no-longer-thriving native tongue
There is no higher praise than *goldene.*
On the telephone, she would have told her friends,

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Though she'd have understood barely a third of it:
You should see my Jackie's golden poem.

To my bubbe, I'd have written *michtam*
Upon *michtam*. Who decides when it's a *michtam?*
Maybe the person who wrote down the psalms
Was actually Obed, David's grandfather
(His grandmother wouldn't have learned to write
And, anyway, we're never told her name)—
So dazzled by the *apple of his eye*
Who sang his *alef-bet* at eighteen months,
The Song of the Sea, by heart, at three:
Conductor, hear my David's golden poem.

Was David thinking of him when he wrote
May you look upon your children's children?
You made it, bubbe, even if your boys
Were not quite *olive plants around your table,*
Though one was a hell of a basketball player,
And my father, the *goldene neshumeh,*
Would walk around the house reciting Shakespeare,
Though now he claims to need help with my poems—

He'd understand if I could write a *michtam,*
But I can't do better than a *michtav,*
Of which I've written more than a fair number.
Maybe, since a *michtav* is a letter,
A *michtam*'s an epistolary psalm.
It's not a bad idea, a letter to God:

You could collect your thoughts that way
Or, better yet, decide not to send it
As I decide with nearly all my letters,
Or sloppiness dictates, since I lose them all,
Or am incapable of having stamp,
Letter, envelope, correct address
All in the same place at the same time,

None of which is necessary for a poem.
But what is required of a *michtam?*
A living grandmother? a ten-string harp?
What's missing from the last three thousand years?

A Jesuit priest, in the Anchor edition,
Which I smuggled from the synagogue library,

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Suggests that *michtam* means *inscribed in stone,*
And while I have nothing against Jesuits—
Indeed, I've always thought they think like Talmudists—
This is not the meaning of a *michtam*. . . .

The words of a *michtam* are pure gold
Inscribed with the feather of a turtledove
On parchment from the skins of newborn lambs
Immaculate enough to serve as sacrifices
As the sun goes down on *Hoshana Rabba*
(With ivory altars, knives of beaten gold)
And one more book of life is sealed for good.

Or perhaps they place their impress on the wax
That seals the book, or other vital messages,
Unless, of course, they're not inscribed at all
But clamor when the sunlight on still waters
Gathers in the willows' fleeting gold
Just before they weep themselves to sleep

Or rise out of the *lai, lai, lai*'s I substitute
For a lullaby's forgotten Yiddish lyric
Though most of the children from that noisy world
Who wouldn't go to bed without its golden tune
Have already fallen fast asleep.

SHARONA BEN-TOV

Wristwatch on a Nightstand

—for T. P. M.

When sparrows shrill like thawing ice,
and framed panes lighten in the room,
the man turns underneath the bedclothes,
links my fingers to his, and to the scar
where a caress slips faster up his thumb.
Breathing in rhythm's a kind of silence;
a sheet meanders weightless to the floor
his bare leg droops over, knee-deep in sun.
The seconds fall asleep. He's all raised hope,

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I am all his hope needs to be embraced,
and the morning exerts its clearest rays
to lift a cry after the scattered birds;
and if, below their wings, time must be kept,
Paradise is the time our bodies keep.

ANNE ATIK

Spring Song

Up in the hills — aHa aHa

pointing his finger — aHa HA HA

the echo comes — O AIR
O AIR

,

then comes the answer — O AIR
O HERE

!

No questions. Breath quicker.

No fax phone chance-or-planned meeting;
Far from sleeping waking from time-keeping;

And from what time is it. And Where Wednesday Five.

Here. Navy blue with cello.

What time is it? Rhapsody. Live.

Bearing, dying, farewell, hail.

So he's for air and he's for un-
historical air

not air that clings
to antique gold, Pilate's dredged-up stone,
Napoléon's hose.
And he'll have none of it, none.

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Here he's out for echoes from reddening hills
echoes
choes
a HA HA Ha a
.

No o'clock. Hope. There's a spring morning.

Throw off. Throw off. Keep only one
remembered face as souvenir O

look released another time to
other eyes
but now to liquid air.

PEG BOYERS

Letter to a Suicide

—for Cesare Pavese
(spoken in the voice of Natalia Ginzburg)

Caro Amico,

Cesare, how uncomfortably you wore
your name, its imperial resonance
a perpetual scratch on your skin.
Roman grandeur irritated you.
Better the soot and toil of Turin,
sweeter its meager allure.

Yours was another aristocracy,
that luxuriates in despair and disdains
the coarse economy of effort and reward.
How we bored you with our easy banter
and banal satisfactions. Our fraught intimacies
seemed exuberant to you, saccharine our enthusiasms.

Prince of denial, you mistook the negative
for the noble, reveling in the perverse elitism
of *nulla.* What is it to renounce life
when you have never truly lived? Cesare,

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this death you purchased is cheap. Another
instance of your incorrigible parsimony.

Once again you've escaped without
settling your accounts; now we're stuck
with the bill. Well, not exactly. You paid
plenty—if pain can be counted currency.
Generosity was never your strong suit.
Avarice another way of holding back on life.

Even your handshake was stingy: a mere
two fingers offered reluctantly, then quickly
withdrawn. Never a full, lingering hand's
worth. Something furtive in that gesture,
like sneaking friendship against the rules.
The covert reach for tobacco, the nervous,

hurried tamping of your pipe. Uncomfortable
pleasure, futile nicotine to dissipate *ennui*.
Imperious One, Heavy Wit, your last joke
was no fun. This august death, oh Caesar, the final pun.
You sent us off on *ferie,* confident that the *Strega* prize
had distracted you from death. But the winning

made you stronger. Useless now the refined style of
restraint, the flat dry cool of prose. Suddenly literal,
the longed-for gun come home at last to greet your temple.
Irony resolved. Ellipses closed. Oh Caesar. *Cesare.*
August life, august death. Selfish *stronzo.*
Cretinous egotist. Pathetic, cherished ass.

As ever,
Natalia

VIRGIL

Fourth Eclogue

Sicilian Muses, sing a nobler music,
For orchard trees and humble tamarisks
Do not please everyone; so may your song
Be of a forest worthy of a consul.

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The last great age the Sybil told has come;
The new order of centuries is born;
The Virgin now returns, and the reign of Saturn;
The new generation now comes down from heaven.
Lucina, look with favor on this child,
—Lucina, goddess, pure—this child by whom
The Age of Iron gives way to the Golden Age.
Now is the time of your Apollo's reign;
And, Pollio, in your consulship, begins
The grand procession of the mighty months,
Commencement of the glory, freedom from
Earth's bondage to its own perpetual fear.
Our crimes are going to be erased at last.
This child will share in the life of the gods and he
Will see and be seen in the company of heroes,
And he will be the ruler of a world
Made peaceful by the merits of his father.

Dear child, there will be new little gifts for you,
Springtime valerian, and trailing ivy,
Egyptian beans, and smiling acanthus, all
Poured out profusely from the untilled earth.
The goats will come back home all by themselves
Without being called, their udders full of milk;
The browsing herds will have no fear of lions;
Your cradle will be a cornucopia
Of smiling flowers blossoming around you;
Nowhere will there be serpents any more,
And nowhere plants in which a poison hides;
And everywhere the Assyrian spice will flourish.

As soon as you are old enough to read
The praise of heroes and your father's deeds
And therefore know what excellence consists of,
The grain will yellow and ripen in the fields,
The purple grapes will cluster on wild vines,
And honey will drip like dew from the hard oak tree.
But there will still be vestiges of sin,
And therefore men will still be forced to try
The sea in ships, build walls around their towns,
And labor in their fields to plow their soil.
There will be need for yet another Argo
To carry its chosen heroes on their mission;
There'll be another war, and once again
Another Achilles will be called to Troy.

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But when the years have brought your strength to manhood,
No longer then will merchant ships set forth
Laden with things to trade in foreign places;
Each land will bear of itself what it needs for itself;
The earth will suffer the harrow's tooth no longer
Nor vines suffer the claw of the pruning-hook;
No longer need cloth learn to imitate colors;
Out in the meadow the fleece of the ram will change
Of its own accord from purple to saffron yellow;
In the meadow the lambs will graze in bright red coats.

"So let all ages be like this," the Parcae,
Voicing the gods' unchangeable decree,
Cry out in unison to their whirling spindles.

O you dear child of the gods, increase of Jove,
The time has come about at last for you
To take upon you those great honors foretold;
Behold how the vaulted universe trembles in awe—
Earth and the range of sea and the depth of sky—
Glorying in the new age coming in.
Oh, if I have long life and at the end
Have breath enough and spirit enough to be
The teller of the story of your deeds,
Then neither Linus nor Thracian Orpheus could
Defeat me in the singing-contest, though
Orpheus' mother, Calliope, were there,
And Linus' father, Apollo the beautiful;
And Pan himself, Arcadia the judge,
Judged by Arcadia, would admit defeat.
So, little baby, may your first smile be
When you first recognize your mother, whose
Long nine-months travail brought you into the world.
That child who has not smiled thus for his parents
No gods will welcome at their festive table
Nor any goddess to her amorous bower.

Translated from the Latin by David Ferry

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ALFRED LICHTENSTEIN

The Virgin

Maria Mondmilch was the only child of the art historian Doctor Maximilian Mondmilch and his lovely wife Marga Mondmilch. Mrs. Mondmilch is said to have been at one time a scullery maid in the café in which Mr. Mondmilch—who at the time was a student—drank tea, read newspapers, and smoked. After the birth of the child she had secretly left her spouse, supposedly to spend a few weeks with a champagne-waiter. Thereafter she fooled around alternately with very different men from very different social classes. She returned when she learned that the incurable doctor had been brought to a mental institution for diseases of the brain. She carefully looked after the mortally ill man for the short time before he died. Then she married a wonderful coachman, who idolized her.

Doctor Mondmilch's illness was first discovered when he wanted to commit a criminal offense against his eight-year-old daughter. Fortunately the atrocity was prevented at the last moment. The child, frightened in heart and mind, was placed in the care of the madman's brother, the excellent Moriz von Mondmilch, a first-class administrative officer. The last word of the dying art historian was, "Maria."

A curious affection developed between the uncle and the niece. Nothing happened that could have been construed as illegal. The passion between the child and the old man aroused the jealousy of old Mrs. Minna von Mondmilch. After the marital discord had become too burdensome, the angered civil servant felt compelled to agree one year later to a separation from his ward. He also had to consider his daughter, who had become a young woman. The parting was hard. His Excellency Moriz von Mondmilch had a crying fit.

Maria Mondmilch arrived in a large city. The strangers with whom she boarded were paid a large amount of money. But otherwise they did not concern themselves with Maria Mondmilch. She exchanged secret letters with the noble uncle, filled with overflowing longing for life and hopes for adventure. The consciousness of constantly having something to hide gave her a solemn, inexplicable superiority. Maria Mondmilch preserved her uncle's letters as though they were sacred relics. Some of the letters were lost and became evidence in the famous divorce trial that excited the whole country.

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Maria Mondmilch was a student in the big city at a girls' high school. She was not among the best students. Sometimes she used her time diligently. She was accused of having instigated all kinds of dirty tricks that took place. When it became known that the head of the institution had met her in the evening on a disreputable street, it was expected that she would be dismissed from school. In the proceedings against a teacher of literature at the high school who, in spite of being accused of having committed several sexual crimes, had to be acquitted, she was the most important witness.

The young girl preferred to spend the night in the notorious section of the city. Maria Mondmilch allowed every possible kind of riff-raff to speak to her, but she ran away from most of the men. She was not yet fifteen years old when she permitted a peddler, whose acquaintance she had made one filthy evening in a foul alley on a bridge, under neglected, ancient gas lamps, to photograph her naked in indecent poses. When she was sixteen years old, she spent Christmas vacation with a handsome electrician, who was a complete stranger to her, named Hans Hampelmann, in a run-down hotel, posing as husband and wife. Given her erotic needs, it was not difficult to explain her decision to study medicine after graduating.

The hungry actor Schwertschwanz—an intelligent and worn-out-looking person, who stank of cheap chocolate—moved with aimless longing through the nocturnal, glittering, noisy streets of the city in which Maria Mondlich studied medicine. He met her while she was returning sadly from a lecture on human sexual diseases and male disorders. For fun—pretty much—he spoke to her. Together they went into a cheap saloon.

Before speaking to the student, the actor Schwertschwanz had been thinking about what could most readily explain the doubt he had had for many years: the ultimate unimportance of all events, or only the happenstance that important people often must croak because of a lack of appropriate nourishment and medicine. . .the inadequacy of women. . .the incurable nature of tabes, the symptoms of which he believed he detected in himself. . . .When Maria Mondmilch named her profession, he lit up. Syphilis and its consequences were mentioned. Miss Mondmilch told of frightening cases. Mr. Schwertschwanz listened, shocked and carried away. He was fascinated when she, coquettishly stressing that she unfortunately could maintain only professional relationships with men, as though unintentionally revealed a well-shaped but austere leg, which was encased in an exciting, ordinary, half-silk stocking.

The student did not hide her liking for the actor. His shabby appearance filled her with confidence. The area around his (internally) almost rotted, true-hearted blue eyes, worn out, as she imagined, by makeup and hopelessness, by excessive whorings or masturbation, gripped her soul. His

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being, a mixture of smugness and unashamed aggressiveness, very much excited her. Amidst the screaming, the waiters, the beer-benches, and the vapors, under the addictive yellow gaslights, she had to call out with rapture, "I've never met a man like you before, Mr. Schwertschwanz." He was so pleased, he touched her. While a troop of soldiers marching by outside whistled the well-known folk song, "Little Maria, you sweet little creature," etc. . . .

Without a spoken agreement, the lovers, arm-in-arm, moved in the direction of the student's room when they left the boozy saloon. Upstairs, Maria Mondmilch lay down, with her legs crossed, on a sleep-sofa near the bookcase. The actor sank into a soft chair, next to which a small table with an ornate bottle of cognac stood. Talking was difficult. Each wanted to sob out to the other how much he or she had suffered from childhood on. They wanted to gobble each other up, so greedy were they as the minutes went by. Something stood between them. The actor drank the cognac. The student played nervously with her hands and feet.

The actor could no longer bear his agony. He cried out gently—it was as though something had been shattered to pieces—"I shall be frank. I am syphilitic." Some tears rolled down his cheeks. He was startled by how insincere he was. The student held her hands in front of her face. As theatrically as he. But unconsciously.

He had miscalculated. Her erotic excitement was out of control. She wriggled on her sleep-sofa. She held out her hand to him. She whispered: "Poor man, come." He did not take her hand. With lowered eyes, in a face filled with unhappy renunciation, whose effect had been tried out on many hysterical women, he said: "You of all people should know that contact with me might give you an infection, although in the last few years my Wasserman test was always negative." Then she said heroically: "Frankness deserves frankness. I am a virgin."

Instinctively she had taken vengeance. He no longer had control of his overwrought senses. Like a cat he pounced onto the girl in the middle of the sleep-sofa. Now she fought him off. Ready, with anxious eyes, to give herself to him.

As they were wrestling the student sang her theme song: "I am Maria Mondmilch, the girl, the virgin. Open your door for me. You, I tried the surface of many men's flesh, old men and young. I tempted them all. In all of them I sought my man. No one penetrated me deeper than my skin. . . .I prowled around during the days. Ran during the nights. I slept in the same bed with musicians and aristocrats. I was with salesmen and with pimps and with students. I ran around with bicycle artists and with lawyers. I let no man pass without looking him in the eye. Whether it rained. Or was winter. Or the sun shone. No one could call me his woman. No one was

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my man. One shot himself. One jumped into a swamp. I am guiltless. . . .One went mad. One kicked me. Most went away as though nothing bad had happened. . . .You, blue-eyed sorrowful face beneath me, oh, would that you were my man, that I might bloom in you. Are you my man in whom I blissfully sink—"

And the actor sang to the student as they wrestled: "I am the actor Schwertschwanz, the man, the lecher. In all the bodies in which I have drunk, I sought you. I have become a drinker. Out of longing. I have poisoned my blood out of love. How meaningless it would be if I—half dead—found you now. I have looked for you too long to find you yet."

Then Maria Mondmilch called out as she fell on him: "Little Schwertschwanz, do you love me—" And already intoxicated: "He does not love me."

The man fell back in utter indolence. The student spat on his collar. Rammed the hat on the head of the spineless man. Pressed a gold coin in his hand. Threw him out.

While the actor Schwertschwanz, trembling with desire, went about searching for the right whore, Maria Mondlich sat over a thick anatomy textbook. She looked at the drawing of a completely naked man. And howled like a dog at the sea.

Translated by Sheldon Gilman and Robert Levine

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ALFRED LICHTENSTEIN

The Winner

Max Mechenmal was an independent manager of a newspaper kiosk. He ate and drank well; he had relations with many women, but he was careful. Because his salary was insufficient, he occasionally permitted himself to take money from Ilka Leipke. Ilka Leipke was an unusually small, but well-developed, elegant whore, who attracted many men and women with her bizarre nature and apparently silly ideas, as well as with her actually tasteful clothing. Miss Leipke loved little Max Mechenmal. She called him her sweet dwarf. Max Mechenmal was angry all his life that he was small.

Max Mechenmal came from an unfortunately impoverished family. He had enjoyed an excellent education in an institution for retarded children until he was forcibly dismissed at a very early age. The reasons for his dismissal were not available; it seemed to have more to do with the poverty of Mechenmal's relatives than with the fact that he was clearly unbearable. For a while he wandered about homeless, since his family no longer took any interest in him. He supported himself mostly by petty larceny. Once the police picked him up and he was brought to a home for neglected children. In the home he was trained as a locksmith. He knew how to ingratiate himself with his superiors by showing unusual dexterity and willingness. He secretly tormented his younger, weaker comrades, or he set the stronger ones against each other. He had no friends; when he had completed his training and was released, the others were happy.

The unusual skill that Max Mechenmal, because of his technical gifts, had developed in making keys and opening difficult locks he would very gladly have used for breaking and entering, and burglary; he would have liked to have become an infamous burglar. The proceeds from the burglaries would have permitted him to dress elegantly, to show off with the finest women. The sickening, massive fear of being caught prevented him. He was content to seduce the daughters and servants of the masters for whom he worked, and to commit occasional burglaries that involved little risk. His ambition remained unsatisfied.

By chance the direction of Mechenmal's life was changed. At the end of a day's work, tired and in a bad mood, he was walking the streets. Lights were scarcely visible, although it was very dark. In an elegant ground-floor room, an elderly lady was arranging the fold of her body. In front of a basement, dirty little girls were singing the song of the Lorelei. The windows

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were etched into the pale, sleeping houses like black panes with bright crosses. The conglomeration of houses resembled large, venturesome ships, which lay at anchor or were gliding to a distant, beckoning sea. The little locksmith thought about the last six women he had loved. His attention was attracted by the hideously ringed eyes of a horribly hunchbacked gentleman who smilingly, with marked pleasure, although somewhat fearfully, was looking at him. The locksmith thought, *hm*—for fun, he remained stopped; with his clear eyes, which shone like polished black buttons on his face, he slyly watched the even smaller gentleman. Embarrassed, he took his hat off his head and spoke, stuttering; said that his name was Kuno Kohn, and excused himself—little else could be made out. The hunchback hid part of his face behind thin fingers, coughed, and quickly moved on. The locksmith thought, *hm*, and went on his way.

Then there was a tug on his arm. He turned his face: the hunchback again stood next to him, still somewhat breathless from moving quickly. Kuno Kohn was very red, but he could, without stuttering, say, "Excuse me for causing you more trouble. I always know afterwards what I want to say." This he said extremely loudly, to overcome his embarrassment. Then he said: "Perhaps you have the time. . .perhaps I may invite you to look for a restaurant with me. . .or may I assume that you have not yet eaten this evening." The locksmith was not against the idea.

In a huge tavern, Kuno Kohn ordered food and beer for Max Mechenmal. He himself did not eat, and he drank little. He enjoyed watching how pleased the locksmith was. Later, probably, he sometimes stroked him timidly on the chin. That pleased the locksmith. At first they spoke of the misery of being alive, of the injustice of fate. After Mechenmal drank his third glass of beer, he boasted of his beloved. That was unpleasant for the hunchback. Up to that point he had permitted the locksmith to talk. And his interest was indicated only by the fact that he shut his blue eyes theatrically and approvingly, as a result of which, for a few seconds, only miserable shadows were visible, or he slowly shook his shapeless head, or he pressed his nervous fingers sympathetically against Mechenmal's leg. Now he began to express his own opinions. He cursed women. His voice seemed at every moment to crack with excitement. He contended that whoever had the misfortune to be a woman must have the courage to be a whore, that the whore is the essential woman, and that relations with women, incidentally, are more or less degrading. When they left the tavern, Kuno Kohn placed the hard, miserable bone that was his lower arm upon Mechenmal's thick, flabby lower arm. A gold bracelet struck the hunchback's wrist. On the way Kuno Kohn asked Mechenmal to spend the night at his place. The locksmith agreed to the request.

Kuno Kohn lived in a large, ordinary room, in a summer house on a side street in the western section. However, the bed was exceptionally

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wide, almost ostentatious. On the pillow lay yellowish and red flowers. In front of the window stood a writing table on which there were some books—perhaps Baudelaire, George, Rilke. Near it and on it lay sheets of paper, which were apparently covered with finished and unfinished poems and treatises. On a shelf at a window stood volumes of Goethe and Shakespeare, a Bible, and a translation of Homer. On the table and chairs lay perhaps newspapers and pieces of clothing. Somewhere lay yellowed photos of old people and children. The locksmith looked at everything with curiosity.

They soon sat down. The conversation, which was lively at first, gradually faltered. Kuno Kohn turned the lamp down. Later he spoke softly and imploringly to the locksmith. Then he offered him the bed. He himself would sleep on the sofa. The locksmith agreed.

Kuno Kohn arranged for a subordinate position for his friend Mechenmal at a newspaper publishing office. Mechenmal picked up his new trade with surprising swiftness, and very soon obtained sufficient knowledge of salesmanship. He changed positions and managed, by means of energy and all kinds of dirty tricks, after a year and a few months, to hold a position of trust as an independent manager of a newspaper kiosk.

Because he had a pleasant way of speaking as well as a face that looked like that of an intelligent doll, the former locksmith soon had won a very large number of steady customers, for the most part female. In the morning a dozen saleswomen from a nearby department store, having purposely arrived too early, gathered around his kiosk to enjoy the dirty jokes and cheerful comments of Mr. Mechenmal. The bank officer Leopold Lehmann, who always arrived punctually at eight o'clock to buy illustrated joke books and theological tracts, sometimes became impatient, because the cheerful saleswomen disturbed him as he tried to make his selection. And the schoolteacher Theo Tontod, who tirelessly and, as a rule, uselessly asked for the modern newspaper, *The Other A*, often got to school too late. Around noon, almost every day, the choral singer Mabel Meier came, on the arm of an old man. She bought colorful, spicy newspapers, or sentimental ones, with long lyrical poems. The old man, who always had a whining expression, sighed as he paid. She was reserved with Mechenmal. At odd hours, Mieze Maier, a teenager, also came, and asked whether Herr Tontod had been there. Once Mieze Maier remained longer; from that time on she did it more frequently. Sometimes a fat, agreeable servant-girl employed by the salesman Konrad Krause was at the kiosk. She said to Mechenmal that he was good-looking, that he had passionately dark eyes and a kissable mouth, and asked if he had time on Sundays to go dancing—she liked him very much. Mechenmal answered that he would not object

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to satisfying Miss Frida's inclination occasionally. The servant girl reminded him embarrassingly often of his promise. Every Tuesday afternoon a certain Mr. Simon, who lived in an open sanitarium, and was always accompanied by an attendant, asked for the magazines for undertakers; if there were not enough available, he went off peeved, cursing the crematorium. Kuno Kohn also came a few times every week, rarely to buy something, mainly to visit his friend and to make an appointment for the evening rendezvous. Students, ladies officers, workers bought their newspapers. Only Ilke Leipke, in spite of Mechenmal's repeated requests, refused to come to the kiosk.

This was a whim of Ilka Leipke's. She had much time for herself and complained to her beloved many times that the days were more boring than the nights. Ilka Leipke also loved her sweet dwarf no less than in the early days of their acquaintanceship, even though Mechenmal was increasingly high-handed and nasty in his treatment of her. It went so far that he enjoyed it when she cried; he was never content until he had brought her to tears. Then it gave him pleasure to comfort her. Afterwards, however, he was very good to her; basically, he loved her. He let Ilka Leipke caress and kiss him. He was a bit larger than she, but she held him on her young body like a child. They told stories to each other. They laughed. They kissed. They often went over the story of the way they met. They discovered thousands of new details, or made something up because it was fun. The girl found, in a box in which small items lay, a clipping from a newspaper, which read like this:

> MARRIAGE REQUEST
>
> A young, somewhat small, very good-looking man, tired of being alone, is looking for a similarly inclined lady, with honorable marriage in mind. Money an advantage. Send friendly replies to Max Mechenmal.

Or Mr. Mechenmal took out of his wallet a blue letter with violet-red spots, which he held out smilingly to the girl. Miss Leipke then read it well, in a gentle, loving voice:

> Very honored gentleman! Read your request for marriage. To my regret I cannot supply capital. For my part I could do without the marriage, of which I have no need yet. I am by trade a woman. I am small (but wow!). I am tired of having boyfriends and therefore am

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looking for a relationship with a steady man. If you find my proposal agreeable, please send me a photo of yourself. I remain your devoted

Ilka Leipke

When they had embraced and kissed enough, they made up games. Ilka Leipke showed great talent in showing the happily giggling Mechenmal how her friends would behave in corresponding positions. She bent herself into the most surprising positions. She grimaced comically. Mechenmal was able make up fictitious names by the hour, with which he could make reference to certain parts of her body in the presence of other people, without their being able to tell what he meant. So the evenings and the nights that Ilka Leipke had set aside for her friend went by. Often Mechenmal did not have the time to go home. Then she got up, if he was still asleep. Made coffee. In her slippers, dressed only in an old evening wrap, she went out and got pastry from a baker. She placed a white cloth on the table. She arranged everything in an appetizing manner. She prepared some sandwiches for him to take with him. She disappeared again into her bed, where she slept well into the afternoon. Mechenmal, however, somewhat sleepy and weary, but in a good mood, hurried off to his kiosk.

Late evening crept like a spider over the city. In the light of Kohn's little lamp the upper torso of Kuno Kohn was a bit bent over the table. On the sofa, breaking the circle of lamplight and stretching beyond it, lay Max Mechenmal, half in the dark. Windows glittered in lush, flowing black. Swollen and blurred objects rose up out of the darkness. The open bed shone with a whiteness. Kohn's hands held papers with writing on them. His voice sounded gentle, dreamy, singing with feeling. He often became hoarse and coughed like someone who had read much. One could hear: "The old splendid stories about God have been slaughtered. We must no longer believe in them. But the knowledge of misery drives us to need to believe—the longing for new, stronger belief. We are searching. We find nothing anywhere. We torment ourselves because we have been helplessly abandoned. Why doesn't someone come, teach us non-believers, who thirst for God." Kohn was quiet, full of expectation. Mechenmal had secretly been amused during the lecture. Now he broke out. Then he said: "Don't take this wrong, little Kohn. But you certainly have funny ideas. This is really crazy." Kohn said: "You have no feeling. You are a superficial being. It is also certain that you are a psychopath." Max Mechenmal said, "What do you mean by that?" Kuno Kohn said, "You'll find that out soon enough." Max Mechenmal said merely, "Ah, so." He was angry that Kuno Kohn had called him superficial. He thought of Ilka Leipke.

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Then Kuno Kohn said: "Death is an unbearable thought. For those of us who are without God. We are damned to live through it in advance hundreds of nights. And to find no way past it." He became very quiet. Mechenmal wanted to show his friend Kohn that he too could express himself about perverse problems. He thought it over, and said: "I have a different version, little Kuno, little Kohn. However, it is an emotional matter. I also tell myself thank God for those who have no God. God is nonsense. To waste a word on the topic is unworthy of a thinking man. But listen, I have no need of God—not in life, not in death. Death without God is very beautiful. It is my wish. I think it's wonderful simply to be dead. Without heaven. Without rebirth. Utterly dead. I can't wait. Life for me is too hard. Too stimulating."

He wanted to speak further. There was a knocking at the door; Kohn opened it. Ilka Leipke quickly came in. She said, "Good evening Herr Kohn. Excuse me for disturbing you." She screamed at Mechenmal: "So, I catch you here. So, for this you have abandoned me. You're only using my body. You have never grasped my soul." She wept. She sobbed. Mechenmal tried to calm her down. That irritated her even more. She shouted: "To betray me with a crippled Kohn. . . .I'll report you to the police, Mr. Kohn. You should be ashamed of yourselves, you swine. . . ." She had a crying fit. Kuno Kohn was incapable of responding. Mechenmal pulled her up from the floor upon which she had thrown herself screaming. He said with a changed, stern voice, that her behavior was unseemly, that she had no grounds for jealousy for, after all, he had no obligations. Then Ilka Leipke looked at the hunchbacked Kohn humbly, like a beaten little dog. She was very quiet. She followed the angry Mechenmal out the door. When Kohn was alone, he gradually became enraged. He thought: such a rude person. . .and at intervals: how upset the cow had become. How jealous she is of me. One of the few women who pleases me. . .and she goes and chooses the little animal Mechenmal. That is atrocious. Early the next morning Kuno Kohn stood in Miss Leipke's drawing room, trembling like an actor with stage fright. When the maid brought Kuno Kohn's card, Miss Leipke was reading the forbidden pamphlet, "The Suicide of a Fashionable Lady. Or, How a Fashionable Lady Committed Suicide." Her eyes were filled with tears. When she had finished reading the entire pamphlet, she freshened her makeup. Finally, covered only by a silk morning coat, she appeared in the drawing room. Kuno Kohn was red up to his ears. Groaning, he said that he had come to apologize for yesterday's scene, that Miss Leipke did him wrong, that she knew him too briefly. He had, after all, inner worth. Then he spoke in praise of his friend, the worthy Mechenmal; but he did not disguise the man's lack of a refined inner feeling about life. Miss Leipke looked at him with beguiling eyes. He turned the conversation to art. Then

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he turned the conversation to her legs; she said frankly that she too liked her legs. She had lifted her morning coat somewhat. With his shy hands, Kuno Kohn carefully lifted it higher—

That evening Kuno Kohn sat dreamily in his room. He looked out through the hole made by the open window. In front of him the gray inner wall of the house dropped a short distance. With many quiet windows. There was no sky, only shimmering evening air. And a gentle, occasional breeze, which could scarcely be felt. The wall with the windows was like a lovely, sad picture. Kuno Kohn was surprised that it was not boring. He stared steadily and deeply into the wall. It seemed kind. Friendly. Full of loneliness. Secretly he thought: the wind against the wall is doing this. He sang inwardly: *Come, be. . .loved*—a bell startled him.

The postman brought him a letter from the Clou Club. The Clou Club requested Mr. Kohn to read from his works on a certain evening.

Eight days before the appointed evening a placard went up on the city's pillar for notices. On it was written:

> ANNOUNCEMENT
>
> Kuno Kohn will read from his own works at the Clou Club. Young girls and lawyers kindly requested not to attend.

As the evening approached, Kuno Kohn became increasingly agitated. Two hours before, he had himself shaved. When the man asked whether the gentleman wanted powder, Kohn shook his head no, but said yes. An hour before, Kohn went into a police station and asked for ten five-pfennig stamps and a ten-pfennig postal card.

When Kohn stepped on the podium, he became calmer than he had expected to be. First he made a slip of the tongue, but then his voice gradually became firm and clear. Very few people were in the little hall, but some critics from the large, influential newspapers were in attendance. The next day one of them declared, in the widely circulated *Alten Buergerzeitung*, that the poems which the poet Kohn, who enlists our sympathy because of his physical handicap, brought to the attention of a sparsely attended hall were not yet ready for publication; however, one might expect something from his muse when Kohn has matured. Another declared, in the *Journal for Enlightened Citizens*: the overall impression is pleasing, but the poems are not all of the same quality. In addition, the poet had not read well. But the first line of the first verse

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of the poem "The Comedian" was movingly pithy in expression and feeling.

After the reading, the president of the club, the gifted Dr. Bryller, thanked the poet, whom he called a budding genius. One of the few whom he personally knew. In spite of the ban against young girls, Ilka Leipke had somehow managed to gain entrance. Mechenmal, who had at first said that he would not come, also appeared. At the break, however, he said that he was hungry, that he was going, and hadn't she had enough of the nonsense. If she did not want to come with him she could stay. She seemed suddenly interested in Kohn's hunched back. He wished her much luck, asked if he should play the pimp, and left. Ilka Leipke cried a bit, and remained until the very end. She applauded enthusiastically. On this evening she loved Kohn. In a strange mood she took him to her place.

Towards morning a small, hunchbacked gentleman skipped like a ballet dancer along grey, uncertain streets. . . .

Kuno Kohn from now on avoided meetings with Mechenmal. He no longer invited him. He bought newspapers in another kiosk. That suited Mechenmal just fine. His beloved had told him, with a provocative smile, that she had spent a lovely night in her bedroom with the hunchback. The hump had not been unpleasant for her; it was not as big and hateful as it seemed to a superficial observer. One could easily become accustomed to the hump.

Mechenmal was furious at Kohn. He was gentler and more indulgent towards Ilka Leipke. He did not show her his jealousy, and never mentioned the rival's name. Ilka Leipke was happy. She no longer thought of the drunken night with Kohn. Kohn was no less repugnant to her now than he had been before; she rejected further attempts by the poet. She acted towards Mechenmal as though she were still very much in love with Kohn. Once, however, she could not repress making an unseemly joke about Kohn and his hump. Mechenmal laughed heartily.

Sadly, Kohn went to the shore. A publisher had made an unexpected, favorable offer, and paid an advance. Mechenmal happened to find a poem that Kohn sent from the shore to Ilka Leipke. He read:

Song of Longing

The folds of the sea crack like whips on my skin. And the stars of the sea tear me open. The ocean's evening is lonely from screaming wounds. But the lovers find the good death of which they dreamed. Be there soon, sorrowful-eyed woman. The sea hurts me. Your hands are cool saints. Cover me with them. The sea is burning on me. Help then. . .please help. . .cover me. Save me. Cure me, friend.

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He destroyed it. Ilka Leipke was enraged. She said that Mechenmal was coarse. The little man had soothed her with loving caresses. Later he sat down at the girl's writing table. He took a piece of stationery and wrote:

> To Kuno Kohn.
>
> Miss Leipke, my bride, hereby lets you know that she gladly gives up any further poems; they serve no purpose at all. My bride has told me everything. Be assured that your courtship makes us laugh.
>
> Max Mechenmal

When Mechenmal had mailed the letter he became restless. He was afraid that he had handled things carelessly.

Kohn came back immediately. He went to Ilka Leipke. Showed her the letter. Howling, he asked whether she had forgotten the night with him. She said: "Yes." He moaned. He wept unintelligibly about soul and suicide. Ilka Leipke showed him out. His weakness was annoying to her; even as a child she could not watch anyone cry.

But she was angry at Mechenmal. She began to tease him about Kohn. She claimed that Kohn had often been her guest, and she always found him to be nice. Mechenmal considered her stories to be true. Now he hated Kohn.

He considered how to get of the hunchback, without being known as the one who got rid of him. It did not take him long to come up with a plan. Kohn died on a Sunday, suddenly, but without strange circumstances. His body was released for burial without any difficulty. In the newspaper *The Other A* Theo Tontod provided a short obituary. And the Clou Club sent a wreath. Ilka Leipke had herself taken to observe the body before the burial. The coffin was opened quickly. In it Kohn lay somewhat askew, because of the hump. The features of his face were distorted in a grimace. His hands were rolled-up lumps. Dried blood stuck to his nose and hung over his opened mouth. Ilka Leipke overcame her disgust. She had gasoline brought, took a little silk scarf out of her dainty handbag and dipped it in the gasoline container. She cleaned the dead nose with the little scarf. Then she left. Calm and weeping. Content with her goodness.

When Mechenmal heard of Kohn's death, he was very frightened. He could not bear his room. He left the house quickly, not without first having lit a cigarette. Church bells were ringing from the sunny sky. Mechenmal was cold and pale. He kept thinking: if only it doesn't come

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out. Or he considered where he might run away. He thought of the trial, of the defense, of prison, chains, letters written to the outside world, the hangman. That he would, as his last wish, be allowed to sleep with Ilka Leipke one more time. He moved through the streets like someone trying to catch up to someone. When it occurred to him that he should not call attention to himself, he suddenly began to walk too slowly. It seemed to him that all the people were watching him. In a garden two girls, perhaps fifteen years old, were wrestling. When they saw Mechenmal, they quickly sat down on a bench, letting him come nearer. When he was close enough, they laughed at him; one of them wiggled her legs. He hurried away. Behind him one of them cried out, "See how quickly the man moves." And the other cried out just as foolishly, "Yes, he's smoking." They watched him go, then they went back to wrestling with each other.

Mechenmal gradually calmed down. He thought: they can't prove it was me. I'll deny everything. Ha! Who can prove anything about me. . . .Even if they notice anything! He threw the cigar away. He felt safer. He whistled with the thought that Kohn could no longer bother him. That he, Max Mechenmal, had overcome the difficulty with Kohn so completely. He thought that he tackled life correctly. That everything went well for him. He had great trust in himself. He thought: no sentimentality now. To lead a decent life, one must be a bastard.

He went home happily.

Translated from the German by Sheldon Gilman and Robert Levine

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KAREN WILKIN

At the Galleries

"You, of course," a colleague said not long ago, in a faintly pitying tone, "are a historical modernist." This translates, as far as I can tell, as "someone interested in twentieth-century art made before 1980 that doesn't reflect the influence of Duchamp's ideas." It wasn't intended as a compliment, since by implication a "historical modernist" is someone immune to the joys of post-modernism and therefore hopelessly out of touch, but I was so entranced by the oxymoron that I wasn't offended. In any event, if last season's exhibitions are an accurate indicator, I am not alone. For those of us who care about "historical modernism," a small Georges Braque retrospective was the most spectacular offering of the past months; a survey of the work of the nearly-forgotten New York painter, Edgar Levy, the most arcane. Two recently opened midtown galleries announced their presence with ambitious shows of American abstract painting, while elsewhere, a little known aspect of Helen Frankenthaler's work—her "darker palette"—was examined. (Since I was the curator of the show, all I can say is that the show attempted to make clear that Frankenthaler's range goes well beyond the radiant chromatic abstractions that established her reputation; of course, it all depends on how you define "dark.")

The Braque exhibition, at Mitchell-Innes & Nash Gallery, was an unalloyed pleasure, an intelligent selection of excellent works spanning virtually all periods of the artist's career, from Fauvism to his last decade. While there were no large Studios or Billiard Tables or Bird paintings—the late series that Braque said contained everything he knew about painting—there was ample compensation: for starters, an important "cousin" of the Studios, from the mid-1950s, and a choice group of horizontal, domestic-scale still lifes, from the 1920s. (That the latter *were* choice is no small achievement, given the number of indifferent Braques of this type in American collections.) And there was the unexpected, such as a couple of the painter's little-known landscapes, both probably painted in his Varengeville studio. A beach scene from 1938, all boats and jaunty cabanas against a roughly stroked green sea, was the more cheerful of the two, with playful, staccato dabs of gray and brown pigment vividly calling up the rough textures and cool light of the Norman coast; a thickly-loaded view of fallow fields under a cold sky, from 1956, was bleaker, but just as evocative. Even among the more familiar images there were

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La Nappe Rouge (1931) by Georges Braque. Oil on canvas, 35¼ inches by 45⅝ inches. Courtesy of Mitchell-Innes & Nash.

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surprises. A typical late composition of a table and a garden chair under a striped awning, dated 1954-61, was unusual for its crispness and audacity; everything in this complex harmony of gold, green, and gray was pushed to the periphery, as though sliced and squeezed by the narrow canvas.

Not surprisingly, still lifes were the backbone of the show and its most impressive aspect. Among the earliest, from the years when Braque and Picasso, "roped together like mountain climbers," charted Cubism's unknown territory, was a stunning collage, *Bottle and Guitar* (1914), a tight cluster of pasted papers deployed against a playfully scribbled pencil drawing that did double duty as guitar and table-top. A pair of Synthetic Cubist pictures from 1918—post-Picasso—were also outstanding. In one, a confrontational rock-solid vertical table top, thick, crusty paint provided an exact equivalent for its tightly piled composition. In the other, a brilliant jangle of sharp-edged planes, nailed together by the emphatic diagonal of a clarinet, floated against a complicated sky blue shape that at once suggested infinite space and thrust everything to the surface of the canvas.

Once Braque and Picasso formulated the language of Cubism, Braque spoke it for the rest of his life, finding it a flexible, rich tongue that allowed him to express infinite moods and emotions. The show followed the evolution of his Cubist vocabulary with a wittily patterned picture from 1930, a riot of angles, calligraphic strokes, and dots in gray and rose punctuated with telling notes of sharp green, and with an airy, loosely strung *guéridon* of 1931—with a mandolin and the fruit bowl from the 1930 still life—a curious picture whose relaxed, loopy drawing and fragile color harmonies made it seem transparent despite the crustiness of its paint. The star of the exhibition was the deservedly celebrated *L'Echo* (1953-56), an exuberant spill of broadly painted fragments—studio props, a yellow pitcher, a bird, and the eponymous newspaper—that at once reprised Braque's Cubist past and summed up all the concerns of his last decade.

Despite Braque's secure place among the giants of twentieth-century painting ("historical modernism" section), you don't often see a great range of his work in this country, so it was exhilarating to be given proof once again of his extraordinary gifts as a colorist, his uncanny ability to orchestrate with equal power clear, singing chroma and murky "off" hues. It was useful (and eye-testing) to be reminded that his sensitivity to nuances of surface and touch could result either in potent, expressive painting or in *cuisine*. And it was good to be shown how Braque, at his best, could transform even the most floridly painted, apparently banal subjects into structures of overwhelming formal urgency. In a brief introduction to the exhibition's catalogue, David Nash recalls that shortly after Braque's death in 1964, four New York galleries—Knoedler, Perls, Rosenberg, and Saidenberg—jointly presented "An American Tribute," a retrospective of

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the artist's works drawn from American private and public collections. Not only have there been few comprehensive Braque exhibitions in this country since then, but some of the finest works in the recent New York show haven't been seen anywhere since that 1964 homage; the Mitchell-Innes & Nash retrospective was a welcome corrective to this deficiency.

Two elegant galleries that opened in the 57th Street area this fall provided solace of another kind, by reminding visitors of the high standards and serious aspirations of the glory days of the recently vanished André Emmerich Gallery. (Both of the new ventures involve people with historic links with Emmerich Gallery.) Ameringer-Howard offered a splendid survey of American post-war abstraction with a group of radiant "signature" canvases by Hans Hofmann, Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski and their colleagues, providing vivid testimony to just how ravishing—and how fresh—the work of these painters can be. A block away, the work of one of their distinguished contemporaries (albeit not an Emmerich alumnus), Richard Diebenkorn, inaugurated the unexpectedly dazzling, skylit new space of Lawrence Rubin Greenberg Van Doren Fine Arts. A fine selection of works on paper and canvases from the Ocean Park series emphasized subtle differences between these minutely varied pictures, creating the illusion that Diebenkorn was working out the permutations of his carefully adjusted bands and blocks of color while we watched. (At certain times, on bright days, however, these nuances were sometimes all but drowned in the brilliant wash of overhead light.) If the sheer excellence of just about everything at both galleries is an indication of future directions, they are welcome additions to the scene.

Another welcome addition came in the form of a footnote to the history of postwar American art. Until now, Edgar Levy has been a name familiar mainly to those of us who have spent years probing the formative years of his close friends, who include such luminaries as David Smith, Adolph Gottlieb, John Graham, and Milton Avery. What makes Levy especially interesting is that his (now better-known) colleagues of the 1920s and '30s seemed to respect him highly, crediting him with something they were eager to achieve themselves: a sophisticated understanding of advanced French art. Smith's first wife, the sculptor Dorothy Dehner, described Levy to me as someone with "a real understanding of Picasso, a real intellectual," and in his cranky, fascinating 1937 book, *System and Dialectics of Art*, Graham listed Levy as one of the "young outstanding American painters," along with Stuart Davis, Max Weber, Willem de Kooning, Avery, and Smith, whom he deemed "just as good" or "better than the leading artists of the same generation in Europe." (Graham also included in this category the Czech-born Cubist, Jan Matulka, who taught Smith, Dehner, and Levy at the Art Students League.)

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Flight Over Manhattan (1942) by Edgar Levy. Oil on linen, 48 inches by 50⅝ inches. Courtesy of MB Modern.

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Levy rarely showed his work in those early days and later on, it was almost impossible to see. (A head that Dehner owned was the first I saw in actuality—in the early 1970s.) Then, in recent years, tantalizingly small groups of pictures began to appear at Babcock Gallery, enough to promise the existence of a substantial body of strong work, but not enough to clarify Levy's contribution to the heady early days of the New York School. Finally, this spring, simultaneous shows at MB Modern and Babcock provided a comprehensive overview of this little-known artist's achievement. It was all enormously interesting, particularly for what the pictures revealed about the relationships between Levy and his fellow modernists when they were young, although the effect of seeing more Levy, I am sorry to say, was to diminish, rather than enhance, the impact of those first exhibitions of promising pictures. Less Levy, it seems, turns out to be more.

The works of the 1930s and early '40s proved to be the most vigorous and full of conviction—Picassoid, to be sure, but made personal by lush, dry paint-handling, inventive color, and robust modeling. Marsden Hartley, as much as Picasso, sometimes seems to be one of Levy's chosen ancestors. Like his Brooklyn Heights neighbors of the 1930s, Smith and Gottlieb, Levy was attracted to Surrealist notions of tapping the unconscious as a source of imagery, and like them, he produced his share of mysterious dramas enacted by bony, organic forms distilled equally from Picasso's skeletal bathers, his pneumatic sleeping women, and his "rod and ball" drawings. Some of Levy's complex interiors are intriguingly close to Smith's "house" sculptures of about the same time, with their conflated figures and furnishings, and their collapsed space. But Smith and Gottlieb used these ideas as points of departure and transformed them into highly charged, wholly original, spatially and emotionally ambiguous abstractions. Levy held on to recognizable imagery so tightly that his most adventurous works can read less as reinventions of form in non-specific language than as cartoon-like depictions of the actual in clever "modernistic" terms. In his later years, Levy abandoned this gnarled surrealism for simplified figures and still lifes reminiscent of Avery's work of the 1940s and early '50s, absent Avery's trust in the eloquence of contour and the emotive power of large expanses of uninflected, saturated color.

Which is not to say that there were not some wonderful pictures in the Levy survey: *Still Life with Clay Pipe* (1935), for example, a muscular painting that seems to anticipate late Philip Guston in its clash of broadly defined forms, quirky massing, and seductive paint handling, or *Flight Over Manhattan* (1942), with its knot of geometric buildings and radiating piers, an ocean liner and the Brooklyn Bridge, all crammed into a nearly square canvas behind a fat pink airplane that seems to burst from the confines of the canvas. Levy's insistent touch and a brashly dotted border help to force

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these toughly modeled, *zaftig* forms back into the expanse of the canvas, while a painted label, with the artist's initials and the date, seems to have been slapped on to keep everything in its place. It's a witty, ingeniously constructed picture, with Stuart Davis's kind of "American Scene meets High European Modernism" energy and wisecracking humor. I hope there are more paintings this good in Levy's emerging *oeuvre.*

If "historical modernists" were well served by the past season's shows, there were also rewards for anyone interested in modernism's more recent permutations. A generation-spanning series of shows offered ample proof that the persistent rumors of the death of painting are, as Mark Twain said, greatly exaggerated. Robert Natkin's exhibition at the Reece Galleries was inelegantly titled "Jism and Grace," a reference to something said by the fifteen-year-old Natkin's black tap-dancing teacher during his Chicago boyhood—a remark described by the artist as "my first aesthetic lesson." The phrase gave unfortunate connotations to the milky veilings of some of the best pictures in the show, but it couldn't obscure the fact that they were among Natkin's strongest to date. The paintings still depend on his "signature" stacks of teetering, blunt-edged blocks, shallow stage-set-like spaces, and dappled patterns, but they have become more atmospheric and painterly than in the past, and as a result, they seem more mysterious and unexpected.

The show included numerous studies for larger works: spontaneous, seemingly rapidly executed, richly inflected images that derive much of their charm and drama from the contrast of casual mark-making and "mechanically" produced patterning (actually the result of transferring paint with—and sometimes through—textured cloth). The studies have a looseness and transparency that often sets them apart from Natkin's finished works, but in the recent series, even the largest and most complex of his developed paintings retained the directness and the sense of the hand that is such an important component of the studies. The result was to make Natkin's curiously constructed "tableaux," which often read like abstract stills from some jerky, out-of-focus silent film, appear even more unstable, elusive, and compelling. In some, a subdued, earthy, creamy palette added to their freshness and luminosity, while in others, such as a large aqueous green painting that fused pastoral associations with spring hillsides or deep water to the artist's more usual playful, street-smart allusions, translucent layers of paint created a new sense of air and expansiveness. Natkin is an intelligent, witty painter who sometimes seems a little too willing to settle for producing "Natkins." It was encouraging to see him show accomplished recent works that moved into unfamiliar territory.

For less equivocal landscape references, you had to go to Chelsea, to Julian Hatton's exhibition at Elizabeth Harris Gallery—which is not to

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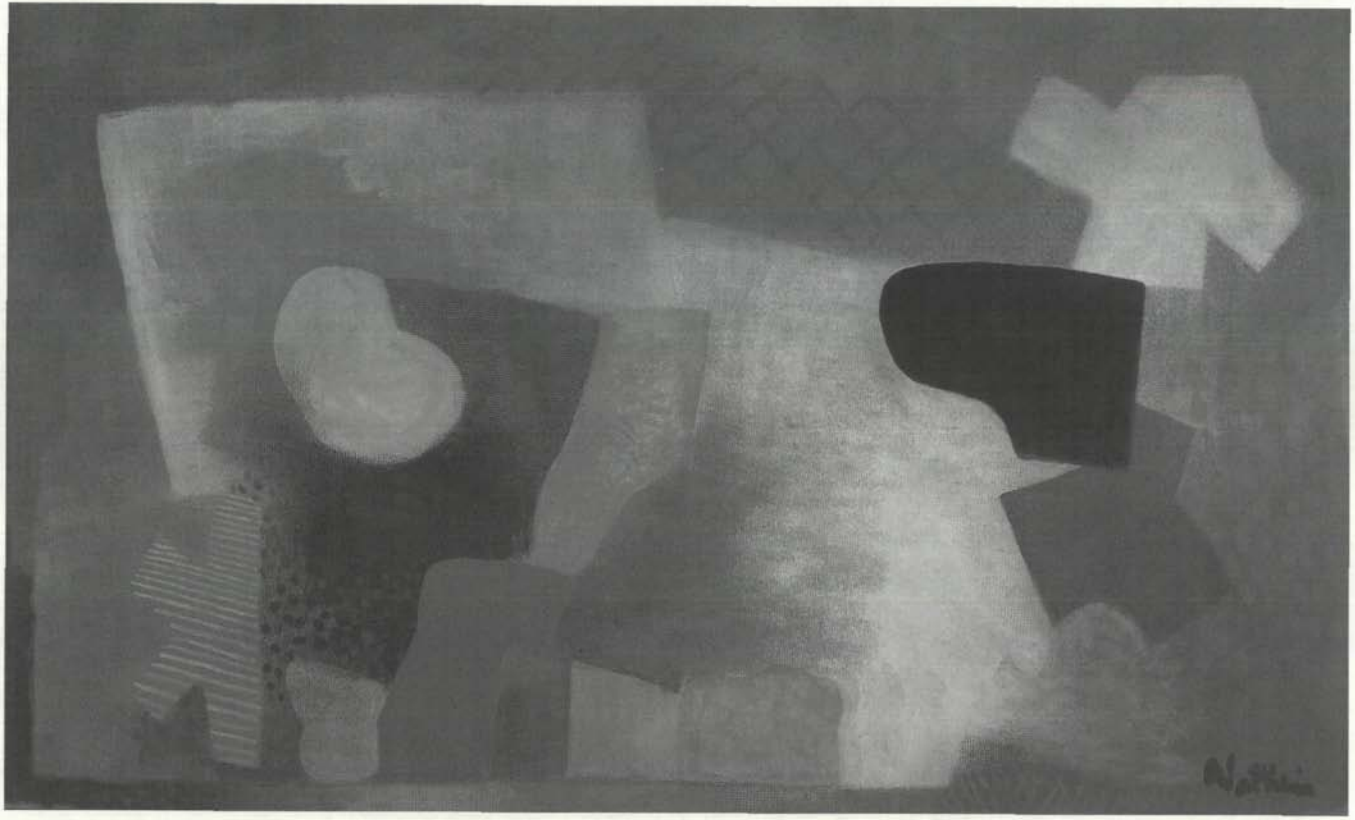

Jism & Grace (1997) by Robert Natkin. Acrylic on canvas, 5 feet by 8 feet. Courtesy of the Reece Galleries.

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imply that his pictures were literal or predictable. Anything but. I've commented before on the overtones of both German Expressionism and the pioneer generation of American modernists in Hatton's dense, lively images, and his solo show of generously scaled canvases bore this out; I kept thinking about Burchfield and Hartley, and maybe early Kandinsky, with a nod to the Matisse of the *papiers coupés*, but Hatton's recent work also bore out his originality. He paints a visionary, cheerful world of considerable charm, constructed out of flattened, highly simplified landscape forms, saturated color, and crisp-edged shapes. Everything is so taut and broadly indicated that the pictures demand to be considered as much in terms of putting paint on canvas as in terms of references to nature. Vertiginous shifts of scale and spatial tilts even provoke thoughts about Western painting's accumulated conventions of representing near and far. Hatton's best pictures read as though geologic forces or the thrust of growth had pushed everything toward the surface, although they can also be weirdly animated; in one, a brilliant blue loop of river reared up like a giant snake humping across a field. I'll be interested to see what happens next.

Also at Elizabeth Harris, Elisa D'Arrigo showed modestly sized wall-hung sculptures constructed with little bound cloth bundles, tightly packed into ambiguous configurations and delicately colored. Their inheritance from the Eva Hesse/Louise Bourgeois tradition of feminist "soft" sculpture was plain, but they were no less engaging for declaring their lineage. D'Arrigo has a real sensitivity to issues of scale that allows her to exploit subtle size differences in both her components and her finished gatherings of bundles. In addition, small variations in how open or closed the bundles are, or how tightly wrapped or packed, all help to enlarge their associations, so that the best works flutter between suggestions of the natural world and the body, between artisanal craft and pure accumulation.

Stephen Westfall's cool, dispassionate recent canvases at Lennon-Weinberg were at the opposite end of the emotional and theoretical spectrum from either Hatton's paintings or D'Arrigo's constructions. Westfall's pictures were, as they have been for some years, demonstrations of apparently rational geometric systems, created and then deliberately disrupted. I say "apparently" because nothing is ever quite what it purports to be. Westfall seems to conceive of a picture in the simplest, almost reductive terms: a flat rectangular surface marked by restatements of the vertical and horizontal. But he constantly raises and defeats our expectations. Proportions change; grids slip out of alignment; edges fail to connect. Westfall's paintings can be one-liners, failing to hold your attention once you have cracked the "code," but when they succeed, they are not simply displays of theoretical possibilities, but images that compel your visual as

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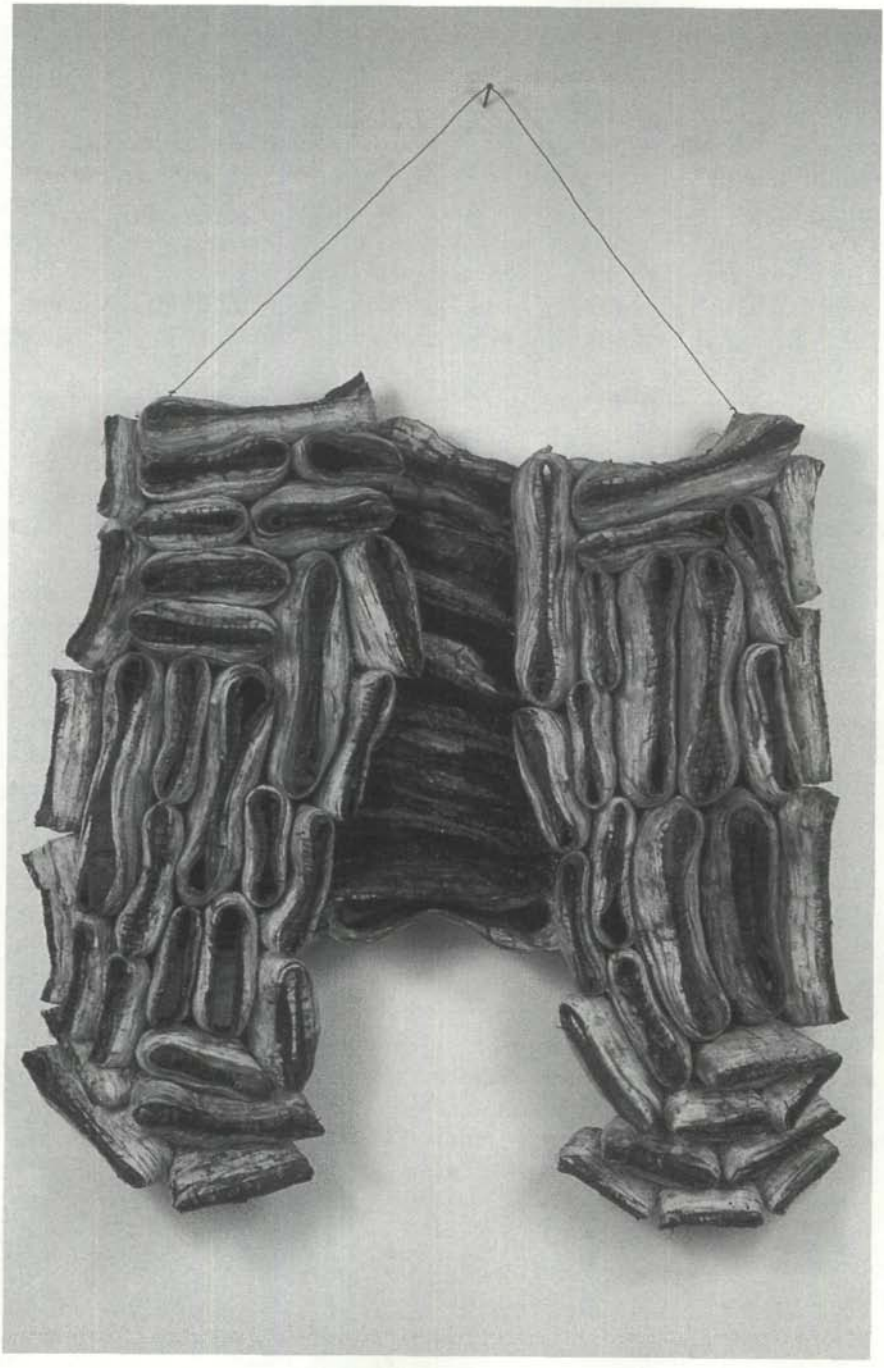

Inside Out #6 (1998) by Elisa D'Arrigo. Cloth, acrylic, wire, and pigment, 49 inches by 26 inches by 7 inches. Courtesy of Elizabeth Harris Gallery.

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well as your intellectual faculties, demanding, for example, that you consider the ways oppositions of super-saturated colors seem to alter proportions, or the way off-set lines can warp space. In some recent pictures, Westfall has introduced a second, not quite congruent grid that not only implies another layer of space and sets up new relationships with the shape and proportion of the canvas, but also allows the introduction of more color in unpredictable ways. The syncopated rhythms and erratic pulses that result make these paintings, to my eye, some of Westfall's most arresting and challenging to date.

And to celebrate the advent of spring, nothing seemed so appropriate as Salander-O'Reilly Galleries' extraordinary exhibition of late works by Joseph Mallord William Turner, a show that, like Mitchell-Innes and Nash's Braque exhibit, any museum would be proud to have mounted. The selection of "near-abstract" color studies of effects of light and atmosphere was dazzling, their disconnected floods and pools of transparent hues, like their minimal distinctions between earth and sky, land and water, making these century-and-a-half-old pictures seem immediate, fresh, and downright *modern*. (No, I am not suggesting that Turner was an abstract painter *avant la lettre*.) A couple of canvases in only slightly more developed form reminded us of the state in which pictures often left Turner's studio for the Academy's exhibitions, to be coaxed into more literalness by judicious retouching on varnishing day. A small selection of modest "developed" paintings completed the survey. Of course, the fascinating question remains of just what the pared-down oil on paper studies, some obviously not meant for public consumption, meant to Turner himself. It's astonishing to think that an early nineteenth-century painter could produce pictures that still look radically simplified, but it is just as astonishing to realize that two diaphanous strokes on an almost empty sheet of paper could allow that painter to reconstruct, in his studio, his responses to a specific effect of light and atmosphere. The many sides of these issues, and more, including a good deal of fascinating technical information, can be found in the excellent catalogue that accompanied the show, an elegantly produced volume that brings together the often divergent, evolving opinions of a distinguished group of Turner scholars, past and present.

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BOOKS

Wolfe Man

A MAN IN FULL. By Tom Wolfe. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $28.95.

In a 1989 essay for *Harper's Magazine*, Tom Wolfe called for a revival of literary realism. "Dickens, Dostoevsky, Balzac, Zola, and Sinclair Lewis *assumed* that the novelist had to go beyond his personal experience and head out into society as a reporter. Zola called it documentation, and his documenting expeditions to the slums, the *folies,* department stores, wholesale food markets, newspaper offices, barnyards, railroad yards, and engine decks, notebook and pen in hand became legendary. . . ." In Wolfe's view, the novel of the second half of our century has lost its appetite for documenting reality, having turned narcissistically inward. He warned novelists that if they did not regain the appetite for reality, "the literary history of the twentieth century will record that journalists not only took the richness of American life as their domain, but also seized the high ground of literature itself."

Wolfe himself had already displayed his ample gifts as an exemplary practitioner of the New Journalism in such works as *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* and *The Right Stuff.* Shortly before the appearance of his essay, he had published his first novel, *The Bonfire of the Vanities*—an example, one might say, of what a new realism might achieve. Now in *A Man in Full,* eleven years later, Wolfe has again attempted to capture his time with the objectivity and fullness that we associate with the great epic novels of the nineteenth century.

He was of course on to something in criticizing the contemporary novel for its deficient social awareness, as many of his readers, novelists among them, acknowledged. There is, however, a glaring omission in his appreciation of the great realists of the previous centuries (Wolfe mentions Richardson and Fielding as well as the great nineteenth-century novelists). If they went beyond personal experience, they also went beyond reportorial documentation. Dickens, Dostoevsky, Balzac, and Zola had a moral vision of society which their reportorial skills served. Dostoevsky's characters have a psychological complexity inaccessible to the reporter's eye. Documenting reality was not an end in itself. Moreover, the essay, valuable as it is as an antidote to the pervasive narcissism of contemporary fiction, has served the reception of Wolfe's work poorly, for it has invited his readers to hold him to standards to which he is inadequate. To the extent that we apply the essay to his own achievement (reading him as haunted by the presences of Dickens, Dostoevsky and Balzac), we fail to do justice to his considerable powers and to his limitations as a novelist.

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In *A Man in Full*, Wolfe has moved from the New York of *The Bonfire of the Vanities* to Atlanta (the New York of the South?). The man in full is Charlie Croker, a former sixty-minute All-American running back for Georgia Tech and a real-estate developer extraordinaire, married for a second time to an an All-American beauty less than half his age. In physical aspect, possession, social presence, and self-regard, he is an outsized character of epic dimensions. "He loved the way his mighty chest rose and fell beneath his khaki shirt and imagined that everyone in the hunting party noticed how powerfully built he was." A reckless investor in the high-flying nineties, the eponymous creator of a grand concourse that ultimately bankrupts him, Cap'n Charlie (as he is known to his retainers) is perfectly placed for a fall from a great height. The supporting cast of characters include an All-American black football athlete, Fareek Fanon, accused of raping a daughter of the white establishment of Atlanta; an upwardly mobile black lawyer, satirically named Roger Too White; the savvy black mayor of Atlanta; a laid-off employee of a Croker company who finds himself in jail as a result of a bizarre set of circumstances; and a technogeek and his technospeak learned in business school.

The several plots which these and other characters inhabit converge and determine Croker's fate. Wolfe knows where the action is: the board rooms of corporations and banks, the workplace, the college playing fields, the large mansions of the super-rich, the city hall, the courtroom, the prison. His themes are acquisitiveness, careerism, possession and dispossession, social climbing and social descending, and race relations. He is a novelist of the manners and codes of the wealthy, the aspiring professional (both black and white), the black underclass, the Asian immigrant, the hardened and not-so-hardened criminal. *A Man in Full* has something for everyone.

His notation of a scene is nothing if not comprehensive and thorough, the documentarist at work. On entering a room Wolfe provides an exact description of it. A character appears and we are guaranteed a detailed account of his appearance.

> The room was not especially large, but the stylishness of it struck Peepgass right away. Walls of darkest aubergine. . .set off four magnificent old-fashioned triple-hung windows that ran floor to ceiling, framed by spanking white louvered shutters on the sides and ornate white Victorian wood work in the form of an ornate cornice at the top of an ornate eighteen-inch-high skirting at the bottom. . .Harvey Wyndham stood up. Peepgass could notice the changes immediately. His once-thick brown hair was no longer that thick or all that brown.

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> On top were a few lonely strands that barely bridged the two remaining crops. He wore a long-sleeved white guayabera shirt, quite an exquisite one that only halfway successfully hid his much-too-broad midsection and hips.

And then there is the cost of everything: "She had paid $20,000 for a table and invited nine guests. She had bought this dress—a black silk taffeta embroidered with tiny red dots, bare-shouldered and scarcely even knee-length. . .for $3,500. . . .She had spent $4,200 for this necklace. . .$225 for hair coloring (pineapple blond) and a hairdo at Philippe Brudnoy's. . .$150 for makeup at Lacrosse, [and] $850 for these black lizard and patent-leather high-heeled shoes." Dress, furnishings, and the expenditure of money, as much as speech and behavior, reflect character, status, and the moment in time.

The "documenting" of race relations is one of the novel's substantial achievements. Wolfe has captured the tone of condescension in the affection of the new rich white for his black retainers; the calculations of the shrewd black mayor whose performance is a balancing act among constituencies, a performance necessary for his political survival; and the angst of the black middle-class professional, trying to assuage his black conscience as he moves into the white world. Wolfe takes pleasure in his characters' difficulties and weaknesses with a minimum of compassion.

Wolfe has a deadly ear for crackerspeak, blackspeak, prisonerspeak, and technospeak, though for the benefit of the reader much of the dialogue is given in standard English. As Norman Mailer pointed out in his review of the book, he does not have much of an ear for the way women speak and think and feel. Oddly enough, despite his good ear, the dialogue sometimes seems contrived, a vehicle for imparting information. Characters assume the roles of interviewer and interviewee. In one scene Wolfe wants us to know the neighborhoods of Atlanta, so he suspends the action and allows the mayor to take his fraternity brother, Roger Too White, for a tour of the city. Roger registers the reader's impatience when in answer to the question about the ownership of a mansion that has come into view, the Mayor responds: "I'll tell you in due course. . .I'm just trying to construct a narrative, you might say, and I'm just hoping it'll unfold naturally." Roger's voice takes on "a peevish edge:" "Okay. . .construct and unfold." Like Roger, we want Wolfe to get on with it. We are rarely confused by the complications of plotting, the interconnections of its various strands, because Wolfe has the reporter's compulsion for full disclosure. He makes everything explicit, leaving very little to inference—that is, to the imagination.

Wolfe's characters *are* the complexity of their social situations. Charlie Croker is reducible to his macho power and courage, his entrepreneurial

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instincts, his lack of cant; Roger Too White to his ambition and guilt about being too white; Fareek Fanon to his celebrity status and origins in poverty; Ray Peepgass, the middle-level bank executive, to his anxieties about his loss of money and status; and all the women to their satellite function in the lives of their husbands. Only the idealistic Conrad Hensley is irreducible to his social status. The characters, clearly and vividly presented, lack the mystery and complexity of motive and behavior that we find in the great realists.

And what of the moral dimension? Into a world of business tycoons, technogeeks and technospeak, celebrity athletes and sex and violence, Wolfe inserts a fable of stoic honor and self-acceptance. The young idealist of the novel, Conrad Hensley, is made to suffer every possible indignity (unemployment, victimization by callous authority, unjust imprisonment, the threat and actuality of violence) as a test of the fortitude he has learned from the great Roman slave Epictetus, whose book has fortuitously come into his possession. The novel is graced with quotations from the Roman Stoic.

> One of the disciples says, "How shall we discover, each of us, what suits his character?"
>
> Epictetus says, "How does the bull, when the lion attacks, discover what powers he is endowed with? It is plain that each of us who has power of this sort will not be unaware of its possession. Like the bull, the man of noble nature does not become noble all of a sudden; he must train through the winter and make ready, and not lightly leap to meet things that concern him not."

Wolfe glosses Epictetus through the reflections of Conrad. "Only Epictetus. . .was a philosopher who had been stripped of everything, imprisoned, tortured, enslaved, threatened with death. And only Epictetus had looked his tormentors in the eye and said, 'You do what you have to do, and I will do what I have to do, which is live and die like a man.' And he had prevailed." Epictetus enters into the postmodern reality of the novel as a fantasy of moral redemption. In a world in which people are motivated by greed for money, fame, and status, Conrad is presented as a successful Quixote, a Hercules with formidable biceps, son of Zeus (Epictetus's God), who miraculously arranges Conrad's escape from prison through an earthquake and his subsequent role as redeemer of Charlie Croker, the man who had him and his fellow workers laid off. (Wolfe is a great contriver of dramatic ironies.) Conrad teaches Croker, on the brink of bankruptcy, to risk everything for the sake of honor. At the end of the

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novel, Croker is a convert to the stoic Church of Zeus, transforming his bankruptcy into a financially successful evangelical mission.

America is famous for its spiritual quick changes. Its born-again Christians resemble entrepreneurs who, having lost a fortune, emerge from bankruptcy to acquire a new one. The point of stoicism is that it triumphs in the absence of external rewards. Wolfe allows his character to have it both ways. The ending comes off as a joke. Is Wolfe saying that American prosperity won't allow for genuine stoicism? Or is he complicit with American evangelicalism, which says you can have both Jesus (or Zeus) and material rewards at the same time? I have had to give the ending away to make the point that it dissolves whatever moral seriousness the novel tries to achieve.

The question which reviewers have not addressed because they have been largely preoccupied with the question of whether the book is serious literature or not literature at all is the question of Wolfe's point of view. Is Wolfe simply satirizing American reality or is he in perhaps a perverse way celebrating it? One can cite passage after passage to show his demystifying disposition. He is nobody's fool, and he is quick to expose pretension, hypocrisy, malice, greed—the full inventory of vices. However, the abiding impression the novel makes is of a writer caught up in the sheer dynamism of contemporary life. He has it both ways: as satirist and celebrant. The most memorable scenes, virtuosic in their descriptive power (the killing of a rattlesnake, the mating of a prize racing stallion with a mare in the presence of an astonished dinner party invited for the occasion, the battles for possession and dispossession of fortunes) reveal the source of Wolfe's imaginative power. He feeds off the energy and hype of American life, which we see displayed daily on television and in our less-frequent visits to the cinema. This is not life as ordinarily lived, "the dull spaces," which even the excitable D. H. Lawrence believed to be the business of the novelist.

Wolfe writes his novels in the spirit of the New Journalism he invented. His realism is not the realism of ordinary life, but rather of extreme event, that is, event intensified to the level of melodrama. He is not alone in his keen sense of the stereotypes of our popular culture. Don DeLillo has it. DeLillo, the more serious writer, always cultivating difficulty and complexity, is tough going. Wolfe is nothing if not readable. His great appeal lies in his cinematic gift for melodrama, which dilutes whatever is serious in the work to the pleasures of a good read.

EUGENE GOODHEART

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Delta Blues

THE SHAPE OF THE RIVER: LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF CONSIDERING RACE IN COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS. By William G. Bowen and Derek Curtis Bok. Princeton University Press. $24.95.

The dust jacket of *The Shape of the River* reproduces a map of the U-shaped Morgan's Bend in the Mississippi River. The allusion is to the famous passage in Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi*, which serves as the epigraph to Bowen's and Bok's ambitious statistical defense of affirmative action in college admissions—the passage in which the pilot, Mr. Bixby, tells young Mr. Clemens that, to succeed at navigating these waters, "you've got to know the shape of the river perfectly." Bowen and Bok elaborate: the flow of talent from high school to college and into the larger society is not a "pipeline" but "a process akin to moving down a winding river, with rock-strewn rapids and slow channels, muddy at times and clear at others." In their view, college admissions is a particularly complex passage, defying those armchair cartographers who think it should all be reduced to straightforward judgments of merit.

That U-shaped image of Morgan's Bend, like the title itself, offers a strange echo of another recent book on race in America: Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray's *The Bell Curve*. The two books create an intriguing antithesis. Had Twain not come to hand, *The Shape of the River* might have been as aptly titled *The Bar Graph*. Most of the book consists of a gentle massaging of data from a Mellon Foundation study, conducted from 1994 through 1997, which produced the "College and Beyond Database." *The Shape of the River* is determined by what happened downstream to some "eighty thousand undergraduate students who matriculated at twenty-eight academically selective colleges and universities in the fall of 1951, the fall of 1976, and the fall of 1989." The twenty-eight colleges and universities include Princeton, where Bowen served as president from 1972-1987, but not Harvard, where Bok served as president from 1971 to 1990.

The title invites another mischievous image: the residents of Alexandria, Missouri desperately sandbagging the riverbanks as the flood waters rose in 1993. For surely *The Shape of the River* is an effort by two prominent members of the Eastern cultural elite attempting to raise a levee against the rising populist rejection of a policy they spent much of their careers furthering. And in this sense, their argument fails. Their book serves

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as a pep talk to the beleaguered inhabitants of the city built on sand, but it does not move them to higher ground.

Not that Bowen and Bok are unaware of the arguments against racial preferences in college admissions. Three pages into the preface, they summarize some of the reasons "why Americans are uncomfortable" with the practice. Moreover, as they proceed, they offer themselves weary reminders that "we have no expectation that the analyses presented in this study will resolve complex issues to everyone's satisfaction." In other words, many of us won't get it.

Perhaps the reason we won't is that objections to affirmative action in college admissions do *not* center on the idea that African-American beneficiaries of preferential admissions to elite colleges fail to benefit from the opportunity. Some, of course, fail to realize a major benefit. Virtually everyone who teaches in a selective college is familiar with instances of the affirmative action matriculant who, despite every form of financial, psychological, and academic assistance the faculty and staff can provide, is hopelessly out of his depth. Bowen and Bok provide the statistics that generalize that aspect of affirmative action: 21 percent of black students in their sample of students who began college in 1989 did not complete their undergraduate degree programs, compared to 10 percent of Hispanic students, 6 percent of white students, and 4 percent of Asian students.

Academic failure is clearly the exception, not the rule, for students admitted to elite colleges because of racial preferences, and this is exactly what most people outside the academy already assumed. Admission to an elite college is rightly judged as a ticket to the top of American society. Although some fail to take full advantage of the opportunity, most graduates of highly selective colleges and universities are, with minimal friction, absorbed into the professions through graduate school and a richer network of influential friends, acquaintances, and institutional supports than are available to the graduates of the not-so-selective and the pay-and-we'll-admit-you colleges and universities.

In short, Bowen and Bok's book belongs to that category of studies that breathlessly prove the obvious. On average, it pays to be admitted to a good college. On average, it also pays if someone fixes the process in your favor. This is the source of the rising flood of discontent with race preferences in admissions. *The Shape of the River* might even serve as fuel for *ressentiment,* providing affirmative action's opponents ample empirical evidence of the magnitude of unjust rewards eventually reaped by the policy's beneficiaries.

This point has been made in several reviews of *The Shape of the River,* perhaps at the expense of the book's considerable value as a fine-grained analysis of the quantifiable factors affecting academic performance of

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blacks and whites, and as a study of the ethos of elite higher education. For example, turning back to the data cited above about college completion rates, Bowen and Bok offer several important qualifications of the general picture. True, blacks in the 1989 cohort graduated at a lower rate than whites, but graduation rates for both blacks and whites were highest at the *most* selective of their sample of selective colleges and universities. At the top of the heap, very few of any race fail or are allowed to fail. To Bowen and Bok, this finding routs the hypothesis that less-qualified students admitted because of racial preferences are done a disservice by being made to compete in a context dominated by better qualified students.

Bowen and Bok also break down the cohorts of students by several measures of academic qualification. Some of the results are indeed surprising. For example, black non-completion rates are higher than white non-completion rates *across the whole range of SAT scores.* Students who score above 1300 on their combined SATs clearly possess academic talent, but 19 percent of blacks in this category failed to finish college, compared to 10 percent of whites. Bowen and Bok relate this to "a troubling phenomenon often called 'underperformance.' Black students with the same SAT scores as whites tend to earn lower grades."

It is in passages like these that the reader hears that distant tolling of *The Bell Curve.* Bowen and Bok subject all of their measures of high school and college academic performance to regression analyses in search of the factors that play the largest roles in determining success. Socioeconomic status is rigorously factored in and out, along with grades, class standing, field of study, and much else. In the end, however, some factor harmful to the relative success of black students remains unaccounted for.

It is, of course, precisely at this point in public debates that ideology takes the place of evidence. Is the missing factor contemporary institutional racism? The accumulated legacy of past discrimination that has resulted in fewer blacks being raised in families with strong intellectual foci? Or is the residuum of unaccounted poor performance, as Herrnstein and Murray argued, the statistical trace of lower average ability? Bowen and Bok own the second position:

> College grades may well be less affected by family income and parental education per se (which together make up our index of socioeconomic status) than they are by the number of books at home, opportunities to travel, better secondary schooling, the nature of conversation around the dinner table, and, more generally, parental involvement in their children's education.

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This is as close to a sensible middle ground as can be found in the intemperate world of American racial politics, but temperance is not necessarily accuracy. Missing from Bowen and Bok's analysis of the factors that might be depressing black academic performance is the large shadow of affirmative action itself. Could growing up in a culture of affirmative action, with its institutionalized assumptions of lower performance, actually lower performance?

No one, of course, thinks that racial preferences are the sole factor in depressing black academic performance, but the idea that racial preferences may be some kind of factor has been widely discussed and it is significant that Bowen and Bok, mesmerized by what they see as the positive effects of the policy, simply ignore it. What they take as indisputably positive is that, by means of racial preferences in undergraduate college admissions, many more black students than otherwise would be the case graduate from elite colleges and universities, and a very high percentage of these graduates, with the assistance of still more racial preferences in admissions, matriculate to the nation's most prestigious graduate and professional schools. Still further down the river, the black graduates of these elite graduate and professional programs proceed to earn exceptionally high incomes and, in large numbers, play leading roles in American society.

Most policies, however, involve trade-offs. In the case of racial preferences in admission, it is perfectly conceivable that many individuals favored by the policy benefit substantially by having increased opportunities through the rest of their lives—*and* that blacks in general are injured by those racial preferences.

What would it take to determine if racial preferences themselves are a detriment to contemporary black academic performance? This is precisely the kind of question, open to regression analysis in a rich database, for which Bowen and Bok could have made a profound contribution. Racial preferences in American education, of course, have been an environing condition for over thirty years and it is thus difficult to find a control group of African-Americans who have experienced other important aspects of American life without also experiencing education's version of affirmative action—difficult but not impossible. Perhaps examining the academic performance of black and white American students who were educated abroad would shed light on the question. It is not hard to imagine that the eighty thousand students in Bowen and Bok's sample might include a fair number of children of diplomatic personnel and business executives living outside the United States.

But Bowen and Bok attempt no such ferreting out of how affirmative action affects the motivation of black students. On the contrary, they are content with citing statistics about how few blacks were able to attend

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college at all before the 1960s, and how black enrollments have plummeted in the University of California system's selective universities since Proposition 209 outlawed racial preferences in admissions. Of course, neither fact addresses the issue of whether African-American academic performance would on average be better in an educational system that did not rely on racial preferences and did not, thereby, convey the debilitating assumption that African-Americans require racial preferences in order to succeed.

Bowen and Bok are enthusiastic supporters of the view that "diversity" in education is, in and of itself, a good thing, and that racial diversity is an especially good thing. But the loose chain of arguments by which they link this view to racial preferences amounts to little more than an endorsement of conventional wisdom. They offer three points. First, we live in a diverse society, so encountering racial diversity in college is an important part of higher education. Second, higher education is meant to serve a larger social good than merely equipping students with a formal education, and acquiring experience with racial diversity fits that bill. And third, a large majority of students who have attended elite undergraduate colleges (both the 1976 and 1989 cohorts) look back on their college experience of getting to know people of other races as a positive aspect of their education.

Encountering racial diversity in college may, on the whole, be a good thing, but it is fascinating how the idea has, virtually without challenge, become a central dogma of American liberal education. How do we know that diversity is so important that it is worth sacrificing both academic standards and fairness in admissions policies to achieve it? Is diversity achieved by racial preferences the same in the most important respects as diversity achieved by race-blind admissions? To what degree is student enthusiasm for diversity a reflection of the dogma itself?

Throughout their book, Bowen and Bok treat affirmative action in college admissions as a policy with consequences. So it is, but it is also part of something larger: a culture of affirmative action. Like a culture, it has its unquestioned and mostly unquestionable premises, its connection to broader views of life, its tendency to pattern participants' attitudes and dispositions, and its integration with other institutionalized patterns. The premises of affirmative action culture are duly reflected in Bowen and Bok's arguments. They include the idea that the historical legacy of discrimination against blacks in the United States looms so large that it continues to impede access to higher education; and the idea that college admissions is a sufficiently diffuse art that a little compromise on the criteria is not egregious. Likewise, Bowen and Bok assume a view of American life in which race remains central.

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Bowen and Bok, however, say virtually nothing about the psychological and institutional sides of the culture of affirmative action. The tortured combination of black self-doubt and assertiveness alongside the tortured combination of white guilt and anger remain outside their purview, as does the peculiar dynamic that links racial preferences in college admissions with black family life, civic participation, and even religion. Occasionally, however, a sliver of this more complicated world shows through. They tell a story, for example, of "a distinguished black educator," whose son was a candidate for a "prestigious graduate award in neuroscience" given by the Mellon Foundation:

> "My son," the professor said, "needs no special consideration; he is so talented he will make it on his own." But some at the Mellon Foundation apparently valued racial preferences in a higher coin. "Your son will do fine," another person present at the meeting said, "but that isn't the issue. *He may not need us, but we need him!* Why? Because there is only one of him."

One could not ask for any clearer statement of the culture of affirmative action. Even when the beneficiary does not need or presumably want the benefit, he must be benefited.

In my judgment, the United States is slowly moving toward eliminating affirmative action in elite college admissions. The successful ballot measures in California and Washington presage more such steps. But Bowen and Bok make clear just how painful this leave-taking may be. It is a pain we must endure. The generation of Bowen and Bok that led us into racial preferences in college admissions imagined they had discovered a shortcut to a just society. Instead they sent us out on the wrong voyage and left us exiled on a kind of Calypso's island. The benefits of having expedited the creation of a larger black middle class may be real, but the price of being barred from a more just society is ultimately too great to bear.

Bowen and Bok reassure themselves that life on Ogygia is pleasant, but they tell so much truth about how the system of racial preferences actually works that few who read the book who are not already firmly committed to the illusion will be able to conclude that those preferences are a good idea.

Those imprisoned in the illusion are not just its black beneficiaries, but also whites, such as those white college administrators who commit themselves to the doctrine because they believe allegiance to racial preferences

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is a prerequisite to good relations with black students, alumni, and trustees. Perhaps they are right, but this is only another reason not to give special weight to college administrators in the ongoing debate over affirmative action. Most of them are compromised.

Those who study the changing course of rivers such as the Mississippi are familiar with the phenomenon of the ox-bow lake. A river erodes its banks at the outside of a bend, gradually extending it further and further from the general direction of the river's flow. Eventually, however, the river corrects its course by cutting itself a new, straighter channel, and stranding its widest meander as a bent lake—an ox-bow lake—somewhere off by itself. Racial preference in admission to elite colleges is on its way to being *that* kind of bend in the river.

PETER W. WOOD

The Nazis' Forced Labor

SKLAVENARBEIT UNTERM HAKENKREUZ. DIE VERDRÄNGTE GESCHICHTE DER ÖSTERREICHISCHEN INDUSTRIE. By Reinhard Engel and Joana Radzyner. Vienna: Deuticke, 1999.

The victory by some of the Jewish survivors of concentration camps against the Swiss banks that had managed to stonewall Nazi victims for over fifty years has had a side effect: major investigations—and class action suits—into the use of forced labor by German industry. By bringing together information from the enormous literature on German and Austrian finances, on labor and employment statistics, on war production and political motivations, and the many specialists' studies about Nazi aims and psychology, and more, Reinhard Engel, an Austrian economist and writer, has documented in *Sklavenarbeit unterm Hakenkreuz* that by 1945 about one-third of German war production was performed by forced and slave labor. His coauthor Joana Radzyner, a Polish-born Austrian editor and correspondent, made this data come alive by interviewing a broad spectrum of former victims from Poland. They recalled how they had been rounded up in their homes, in movie theaters, and in other public places, and had ended up in substandard housing and concentration camps in Germany and Austria. There they had been maltreated, badly fed, and exploited.

The authors show by means of labor and production statistics that after 1933 the building of roads, war plants, and weapons quickly created full employment; and that after the invasion of Poland, when able-bodied men

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were sent to fight, women and foreigners were assigned to take their places. At first the Nazis imported volunteers from the conquered territories, but by the spring of 1944, of the five million foreign workers who were being transported to Germany, only 200,000 were coming on their own. Ultimately, between ten and fourteen million women, men, and children had been displaced.

Slave laborers were assigned to private industry and to farms, where they constructed strategic *Autobahnen* and other roads, drained swamps, and moved rivers. Only two days after the invasion of Poland, offices for labor exchange were set up there to procure workers for the jobs the Germans needed to fill. In January 1940, Poland's *Generalgouverneur* Hans Frank ordered the transport of "a minimum of one million farm and industrial workers to the Reich." Poles soon had to wear a *P* on their outer garments (similar to the yellow star for Jews), were forbidden to go out after sundown, and were condemned to death when found to have had sexual relations with Germans. They earned between 50 and 85 percent of wages paid to Germans, did not receive the same benefits, and had to pay a special surtax. Later on, all that held for Russians and Ukrainians as well. (After June 1940, foreign workers also included French prisoners of war, and Belgians and Dutch.)

Records of ordinances and discussions among the Nazi leadership document that they anticipated hunger and suffering in the conquered lands due to the removal of its work force. But they did not foresee that war prisoners had to be fed, so that in 1941, of the 3.3 million captured Russians, 1.4 million died of famine and epidemics. By January 1942, the German defense minister Albert Speer declared that war production would be maximized by letting industrialists make decisions about priorities and matters of efficiency. (In many cases, the companies paid the state rather than the workers themselves.) Everywhere, the supervisors were Germans. Apparently, foreigners assigned to farms were somewhat better off than those in industry, although conditions differed from one firm to another. According to Reinhard Engel (and the tales of witnesses), this suggests that companies had much leeway, and that the conditions of these workers were not dependent on state regulations alone. Thus, when their output was deemed too low, they sometimes would be "rewarded" by higher wages and a bit more food in return for upping their productivity. By 1943, 1.5 million railroad workers (12 percent) consisted of forced laborers as well; and the German media no longer portrayed them exclusively as *Untermenschen*. By the fall of 1944, they made up over a quarter of the workforce, and substantially more in specific industrial sectors.

In his chapter on "Jewish work," Engel shows the Germans' wish to prove that Jews were unable to work honestly and productively. For

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instance, they had hungry and emaciated concentration camp inmates carry heavy stones to erect walls on one day which they made them destroy and rebuild a day later. Such chicanery, especially in Mauthausen and Flossenbürg, literally worked many inmates to death. By 1944, when labor shortages had become acute, some Jews also were sent to work in elite German plants—among them Daimler-Benz, BMW, IG-Farben, Siemens, and Steyr-Daimler-Puch—where they were given twelve- to sixteen-hour shifts. If they held out, they might escape the gas chambers.

Engel carefully analyzes the palimpsest of economic and political organizations in Austria at the time of the *Anschluss* as particularly favorable for integration to Germany: low GNP, high unemployment rate, stagnant economy, aftermath of the 1934 civil war. Germany also profited from Austria's highly educated technical work force, its large reserves of gold and raw materials, and its potential for the output of energy (alpine water works), ores (for steel production) and arable lands. By linking all that to financial information, he shows that the immediate order to surrender Austrians' (and Jews') foreign assets saved the German state from bankruptcy. That Austria's unemployment rate almost instantly fell from above 20 percent to 3.2 percent between 1938 and 1939, and that this also was a boon to the consumer economy, accounts in part for much of the Austrians' initial approval of the *Anschluss*. (As does the careful propaganda by illegal Nazis in the years before then.) However, Germany gained much from the (pressured) sale of enterprises at an unfavorable exchange rate (and eventual conversion) of the Austrian Schilling to the German Mark. For example, before the *Anschluss* 8 percent of banking was in German hands; in 1945 it had reached 83 percent. In the electro-technical industry it went from 19 to 72 percent; in the chemical sector from 4 to 71 percent; and in the production of machine tools from 7 to 54 percent. All of this was accomplished with the help of forced labor.

These facts could not have been assembled without the disclosures of the practices by Swiss banks in relation to Jewish assets, which raised the hopes of forced laborers who also began to threaten, and even to initiate, class-action lawsuits. That they organized such efforts, in turn, enabled researchers to locate and question some of them. Moreover, due to the recent availability of records from the former Soviet satellite states, and to the globalization of the market, enterprises that previously were responsible only to their local jurisdictions now may be sued under American law; and when American subsidiaries or partner firms exist under a cloud, the value of their stocks may fall. Therefore, some companies that previously refused to own up to having profited from inhuman practices now admit their deeds, though often arguing that they already paid these laborers' wages to the state—and thus should not have to compensate the victims again.

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Apparently, as the authors brilliantly document, there seems to be no limit to new insights into the horrors of that fascist state, with which Germans and Austrians in particular still are trying to come to terms.

EDITH KURZWEIL

The Last Theorem

FERMAT'S ENIGMA: THE EPIC QUEST TO SOLVE THE WORLD'S GREATEST MATHEMATICAL PROBLEM. By Simon Singh. Walker & Co. $23.00

There was an electricity of anticipation among the two hundred mathematicians who had come to hear a lecture at the Isaac Newton Institute at Cambridge University on the afternoon of June 23, 1993. A visiting local boy who made good in New Jersey, the forty-year-old Princeton professor, Andrew Wiles, had given two earlier lectures that had not been super-exciting. But the audience suspected that Wiles's third and final lecture might be a great moment in the history of mathematics. Although he had not announced it, there was a rumor that Wiles might present a proof of the most famous unproved conjecture in the theory of numbers, known as "Fermat's Last Theorem." Its proof had eluded the world's greatest mathematicians ever since Pierre Fermat had made his conjecture in the seventeenth century.

And indeed, Wiles did present a tightly reasoned, brilliantly convincing proof of Fermat's Last Theorem. When he was done, the audience cheered, and by the next morning, the story ran on the front page of *The New York Times*, headlined "At Last, Shout of 'Eureka!' In Age-Old Math Mystery." Six months later, *People Magazine* included Wiles in its year-end roster of the twenty-five most intriguing people of 1993, along with Oprah Winfrey and the Princess of Wales. Alas—known neither to *People Magazine* nor to most people, even mathematicians—by that time a small team of number theorists whom Wiles had asked to make a confidential, line-by-line check of his very lengthy and complicated proof before he released it for publication had found that it was flawed. Undaunted and self-confident, Wiles was convinced that the flaw was not lethal and set about trying to fix it, while public attention had turned to other momentous developments, such as the O. J. Simpson murder trial.

Fixing the flaw turned out to be harder than Wiles had thought. But after many months of excruciating cerebration he had managed to do it by replacing a complex procedure that had introduced a logical gap into one

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link in the long chain of his tightly reasoned argument by another, simpler technique. On October 25, 1994—a date which will live in fame, at least among mathematicians—Wiles submitted his 130-page-long, now flawless proof of Fermat's Last Theorem for publication, and it came out in the May 1995 issue of the *Annals of Mathematics*.

The tale of Fermat's Last Theorem begins in sixth-century BCE Greece with Pythagoras and the school of mathematicians he founded. The Pythagoreans had shown that the equation $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$ describes the relation between lengths a and b of the short sides and c of the hypotenuse of a right triangle. Whole numbers that satisfy this equation became known as "Pythagorean triples," of which the first four are (3, 4, 5), (5, 12, 13), (8, 15, 17), and (7, 24, 25), and, as Euclid proved three centuries later, there are an infinite number.

Diophantus of Alexandria, a Greek mathematician of the third century CE, wrote a treatise entitled *Arithmetica* that presented many problems of number theory, including that of the Pythagorean triples. A Latin translation, *Arithmeticorum,* was published in Paris in 1621, a copy of which was not only bought but actually read closely by Pierre Fermat, a seventeenth-century French upper-level civil servant (by profession) and mathematician (by avocation).

Despite his amateur status, Fermat made many fundamental contributions to mathematics, including the development of probability theory (in collaboration with Blaise Pascal). Rather than publishing his discoveries, however, Fermat communicated them in private letters to friends, mostly without including any proofs. Many of Fermat's missing proofs were later provided by other mathematicians, foremost among them the giant of eighteenth-century mathematics, Leonhard Euler. Fermat also made marginal notations in his copy of *Arithmeticorum,* jotting down some important theorems and (sometimes) their proofs. On the page of his copy of volume one of the six-volume treatise, in which Diophantus considers the problem of finding Pythagorean triples (a, b, c) that satisfy the equation $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$, Fermat had scribbled (in Latin) what came to be known as Fermat's Last Theorem. Its English translation, which, as any number theorist is bound to notice, consists of twice as many words as Fermat's Latin original, reads:

> It is impossible for a cube to be written as a sum of two cubes or a fourth power to be written as the sum of two fourth powers or, in general, for any number which is a power greater than the second to be written as the sum of two like powers.

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Or, restating the Last Theorem in even fewer words than its Latin original: "There are no positive, whole numbers a, b, and c for which $a^n + b^n = c^n$ when $n > 2$." Fermat's annotation had an addendum: "I have a truly marvelous demonstration of this proposition which this margin is too narrow to contain."

For more than three centuries, mathematicians tried in vain to rediscover Fermat's lost proof of his Last Theorem (or to disprove the theorem by finding a counterexample, i.e., turning up a Pythagorean triple a, b, and c for which it is the case that $a^n + b^n = c^n$ when $n > 2$.) Eventually, in 1908, a rich German amateur mathematician, Paul Wolfskehl, endowed a prize of 100,000 marks to be awarded by the Göttingen Academy of Science for the first presentation of a valid proof—but apparently not for a valid disproof or counterexample. (Based on a comparison of the price of a double room, breakfast included, in a five-star Berlin hotel in 1908 [five marks per night] and in 1997 [400 marks per night], I reckon that the Wolskehl Prize was worth about five million dollars at the current rate of exchange of 1.7 marks to the dollar.) Countless proofs were submitted to the Academy over the years (621 alone during the first year after the announcement of the Prize), most of them sent in by cranks and crackpots, and every one of them invalid. In view of these perennial failures, doubts arose whether Fermat had, in fact, found a "marvelous demonstration" for his theorem, despite the later validation by prominent mathematicians of many of Fermat's other brilliant theorems whose proofs he had kept to himself.

At about the time that Wolfskehl offered his prize, the very resistance of Fermat's Last Theorem to proof or disproof began to take on a philosophical significance on its own that transcended the parochial problem of Pythagorean triples. Was it possible that the theorem was an instance of a mathematical proposition that can be stated in clear and unambiguous terms and whose truth or falsity is, nevertheless, undecidable? This was a deeply disturbing question because mathematics provides us with the most reliable rational description of the mental patterns (a.k.a. "reality") that we impose on the world by our brain's selective culling and processing of the welter of sensory data we constantly take in. Thus any inadequacy of the descriptive power of mathematics would limit our rational understanding of the outer world.

To eliminate that ominous possibility, David Hilbert set out in the early years of this century to demonstrate the descriptive adequacy of mathematics, by reducing it to an axiomatic system that it is both consistent (in the sense that it is free of contradictions) and complete (in the sense that the truth or falsity of any meaningful proposition could be derived logically from the axioms.)

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By mid-twentieth century, Hilbert's project had failed spectacularly when Kurt Gödel showed that its aim cannot be achieved: the axiomatic formalization of mathematics does not yield a demonstrably consistent or complete system. There continue to exist logical inconsistencies in mathematics (such as those associated with self-referential or infinite sets), and, as for undecidable propositions, they not only continue to exist but also there is not even a general way of deciding whether, in the context of a given set of axioms, an as yet unproved proposition is or is not decidable. So Fermat's Last Theorem came to be considered by many people as a prime candidate for one of Gödel's undecidable propositions whose undecidability was itself undecidable. That was one more reason why Andrew Wiles's proof that the theorem was decidably true after all created such a sensation even among people who had little emotional investment in Pythagorean triples.

The story of Fermat's Last Theorem, from Pythagoras to Andrew Wiles, has now been told by Simon Singh in *Fermat's Enigma: The Epic Quest to Solve the World's Greatest Mathematical Problem*, one of the best pieces of popular science writing I have come across. Singh, who was trained as a particle physicist at Cambridge University, is now associated with the BBC's science department, and this book is an expansion of the script of a one-hour BBC *Horizon*/PBS *Nova* TV documentary co-produced by him in 1996. Besides spinning a fascinating historical yarn, Singh provides a substantial account of the abstruse subject of number theory that should be accessible even to readers whose mathematical preparation does not extend beyond high school geometry and algebra.

Although Singh's main focus is Andrew Wiles, nearly half the text is given over to beguiling thumbnail sketches of the work and lives of other great number theorists, such as Pythagoras, Diophantus, Fermat, Euler, Gauss, Sophie Germain (alias Antoine-Auguste Brun), Galois, Lamé, Cauchy, Kummer, Hilbert, Gödel and Turing. Standing on the shoulders of these giants, Wiles saw farther than they did in his search for the Last Theorem's proof.

Andrew Wiles, born in Cambridge in 1953, had become enthralled by mathematics by the time he was ten. On his way home from school one day, he stopped at the local library for his usual treat to browse for mathematical riddles and happened to run into E. T. Bell's popular account of Fermat's Last Theorem and its lost proof. Like some of the world's greatest mathematicians, Andrew decided to work out the lost proof. A sympathetic schoolmaster gave him a book on number theory to provide him with some clues about how to get started tackling the problem. He was a child full of innocence and ambition, seemingly foolhardy to think that he might succeed where generations of mathematicians had failed. But maybe he wasn't

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all that wrong in supposing that he, a twentieth-century schoolboy, knew as much mathematics as did a seventeenth-century genius like Fermat.

After a year of getting nowhere, Wiles wisely decided that he might be able to learn from the failures of his eminent predecessors. By the time he was an undergraduate at Oxford, he was sophisticated enough to realize that he was facing the same impenetrable brick wall that had faced all the others. Yet he did not want to believe that, because it might be one of Gödel's undecidable propositions, there may not exist any proof of Fermat's Last Theorem. So he continued to search for a proof, supposing that the mathematical methods for working it out were already available and that he might be able to provide the only missing ingredient, namely ingenuity.

By the time Wiles became a graduate student in mathematics at Cambridge in 1979, everything he had done for the past decade had been directed toward preparing himself for the assault on Fermat's Last Theorem. But he realized that, being on the threshold of professional mathematicianhood, he had to pick a research topic that would provide him with some results by the end of three years to write up for a Ph.D. thesis. So he put Fermat aside for a while and, on his thesis supervisor's suggestion, set out on a study of elliptic curves (or "elliptic equations," as Singh prefers to refer to them). This move proved to be a turning point in Wiles's quest for his holy grail, because it put him in touch with techniques that would provide an entirely novel approach to the Last Theorem. Elliptic equations bear some resemblance to Pythagorean triplet equations, especially as regards the challenge of finding whole number solutions, for which reason they had been of interest already to Diophantus and Fermat.

Wiles's supervisor had suggested elliptic equations as a thesis research topic to his Fermatomane student, not because he thought they would be of help to Wiles in dealing with his Last Theorem obsession, but because they had recently become very trendy. The sudden, latter-day interest in elliptic equations arose from the work that two young Japanese mathematicians at Tokyo University, Yutaka Taniyama and Goro Shimura, had taken up in the mid-1950s. They were studying modular forms, an esoteric, offbeat branch of geometry developed in the nineteenth century for the quantitative classification and description of diverse symmetric aspects that regular objects can possess in multidimensional space. Modular forms are expressed as algebraic series, in which each term represents an ingredient of the object's overall symmetry. One day, Taniyama noticed to his astonishment that terms of the series expressing a particular modular form were identical to the terms of a well-known elliptic equation. Suspecting that there might be some fundamental, albeit mysterious, connection between these two types of algebraic series, Taniyama examined a few

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other modular forms. In each case he was able to identify an elliptic equation that provided a perfect match.

Not long after this discovery Taniyama committed suicide (for never-explained reasons), and Shimura continued on alone to accumulate more and more evidence for the one-to-one correspondence between the terms of the two types of series. This led him to promulgate what came to be known as the Taniyama-Shimura conjecture, namely: "To every modular form corresponds some elliptic equation." During the late sixties, many mathematicians became interested in this strange correspondence and found more and more cases that confirmed the Taniyama-Shimura conjecture. But since no one had worked out a general proof, it remained merely as unproved a conjecture as had Fermat's Last Theorem.

While Wiles was preoccupied with elliptic equations, not much was happening on the Last Theorem front. But in 1984, the German mathematician Gerhard Frey breathed new life into the problem by claiming that whoever could prove the Taniyama-Shimura conjecture would thereby also prove Fermat's Last Theorem. For the purpose of his argument, Frey assumed that the Last Theorem was false (i.e., that the Fermat equation $a^n + b^n = c^n$ *does* have a whole-number-solution for some $n > 2$). In that case it would be possible to rearrange the Fermat equation as an elliptic equation. But this elliptic equation would have such strange properties that it could not possibly have a modular correspondent. According to the Taniyama-Shimura conjecture, however, every elliptic equation *must* have a modular correspondent; therefore if the Taniyama-Shimura conjecture were true, the Last Theorem would have to be true as well.

Unfortunately, Frey had not proven that the properties of the elliptic equation resulting from the rearranged Fermat equation *would* really be too strange for the existence of a modular correspondent. However, by the summer of 1986, Kenneth Ribet of the University of California at Berkeley had managed to plug the hole in Frey's argument and had shown that the rearranged Fermat equation could not, in fact, have a modular correspondent. So the way was now open for the final assault on the Last Theorem. All that was needed now to prove its truth was to prove the truth of the Taniyama-Shimura conjecture.

After completing his Ph.D. in Cambridge, Andrew Wiles moved to America to join the mathematics faculty of Princeton University. His productive thesis studies of elliptic equations had made his name known in the profession as an up-and-coming young mathematician, and, provided he kept up the good work at Princeton, he faced a bright professional future. But as soon as he learned of Ribet's proof of Frey's claim that proof of the Taniyama-Shimura conjecture would be tantamount to proving Fermat's Last Theorem, Wiles set out to prove that conjecture, dropping

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all other work not directly related to this project. This was professionally less risky than wasting more time on probably fruitless frontal assaults on the elusive Last Theorem, since Taniyama-Shimura had become mainstream mathematics, where brownie points could be earned even for partial results short of complete success. The Last Theorem, by contrast, had become a turf reserved for crackpots, on which nothing but finding a complete proof would get one any rewards. Still, Wiles undertook his onslaught on Taniyama-Shimura in total isolation and secrecy. He turned into a recluse at Princeton, telling no one what exactly he was up to and camouflaging his activities by intermittent publication of results he had obtained in previous years in his studies of elliptic equations.

At first sight, proving the Taniyama-Shimura conjecture seems an even harder nut to crack than proving Fermat, because the Taniyama-Shimura proof has to deal with an infinity of infinite problems. First, in order to prove the equivalence of a particular modular form and a particular elliptic equation, one has to show that each of the infinite number of elements in the modular form has a corresponding element in the elliptic equation. And second, one has to repeat this matching procedure an infinite number of times, namely for each of the infinite number of modular forms that have to be paired off with one of the infinite number of elliptic equations. Wiles decided to attempt this doubly-infinite equivalence proof by use of the theory of groups developed in mid-nineteenth century by the French mathematician Évariste Galois. The utility of group theory for Wiles's purpose was that a mathematical group comprises a set of elements that can be combined by some specified arithmetic operation—for instance, addition—to yield another member of the group.

It took Wiles four years to show by use of group theory that any elliptic equation can be broken into an infinite number of pieces, of which the first has to be the equivalent of a modular form. But he did not succeed in showing—as he would have to for a proof—that if one piece of the equation has a modular equivalent, then so have all the rest. Stymied again, Wiles looked for another procedure that would allow him to extend the identification of the modular equivalent of the first piece to all of the other, infinite number of pieces of the elliptic equation. By the summer of 1991, he had found what seemed to be a promising candidate for extending modularity to the infinite number of pieces of an equation. This was a procedure for analyzing elliptic equations, initially devised by Kolyvagin and recently modified by Matheus Flach—a student of Wiles's own Cambridge thesis supervisor, who had first put him on elliptic equations.

Wiles spent several months adapting the novel Kolyvagin-Flach method for his own purposes and soon found that it enabled him to demonstrate the modularity of all the pieces of an equation belonging to

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a *particular family* of elliptic equations. All that now remained for him to do was to make the Kolyvagin-Flach method work for *all* families of elliptic equations covered by the Taniyama-Shimura conjecture. So Wiles set out on the Herculean task of customizing Kolyvagin-Flach, one by one, for each of the various families of elliptic equations that he had identified in his earlier work. This took up another two years of hard labor, but by May of 1993, Wiles was convinced that he had completed the proof of the Taniyama-Shimura conjecture after seven years of one-track-minded effort. More importantly for Wiles, he had thereby also proved Fermat's Last Theorem after thirty years of dreaming about it. Ready at last to announce his achievement to the world, he took off for Cambridge for his three lectures at the Isaac Newton Institute.

As noted, his historic announcement at the Isaac Newton Institute on June 23, 1993 didn't turn out to be quite the total triumph that Wiles had been looking forward to, because after his lecture the referees discovered a flaw in his proof arising from an error in his manipulation of the Kolyvagin-Flach method. By October 25, 1994, Wiles had fixed it through resort to another technique, the "Iwasawa theory" that he had previously tried and rejected as inadequate for his purpose.

The official certification that Fermat's Last Theorem was proven at last came on June 27, 1997, when the Göttingen Academy awarded Wiles the Wolfskehl Prize, down hundredfold to a measly $50,000 from its original inflation-adjusted value of $5 million. Wiles had found his the proof none too soon, because the Prize was set to expire on September 13, 2007.

There still remains the mystery about the nature of Fermat's "marvelous demonstration" of his Last Theorem. Obviously, it couldn't have been anything like Wiles's proof, which resorted to twentieth-century mathematical methods and for which a thousand margins would have been too narrow. It is possible that the otherwise infallible Fermat devised a flawed proof, as so many other would-be provers of the Last Theorem before Wiles had done. Yet, as Singh points out at the end of his wonderful book:

> Fermat may have had a genuine proof. Whatever this proof might have been, it would have been based on seventeenth-century techniques and would have involved an argument so cunning that it has eluded everybody, from Euler to Wiles. Despite the publication of Wiles's solution to the problem, there are plenty of mathematicians who believe that they can still achieve fame and glory [if not the Prize money] by discovering Fermat's original proof.

GUNTHER S. STENT

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Tracking the Political Keats

KEATS. By Andrew Motion. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $35.00

Keats's letters remind us that autobiographical and biographical perspectives are often at odds. We call his letters delightful for the force of personality they convey, for their improvisational genius, and for the poet's exhilarating, open pursuit of lasting fame. From the perspective of his biographers and most of the rest of us, he has joined the English poets, fulfilling his best prophecy for himself in these letters.

But Keats could, of course, know nothing of the history of his own reception, except for its opening chapter of derision in the Tory journals. We wish we could shout his success to him. From his perspective, the life he narrates in letters is one of grievous failure. There's considerable performance anxiety even in the exuberant letters of 1817, when he found his way into the radical journalist Leigh Hunt's circle. Thereafter, in humor and courage, Keats narrates his "buffeting with circumstance" amid lousy walking tours and lonely stays in off-season resorts, social claustrophobia, ill health, intense sexual jealousy, false starts in poetry and drama, the abandonment of his great ambition, and despair. Following what we like to term his *annus mirabilis*, during which he had composed the great Odes and much more, Keats laments that he has "done nothing," that he has left no immortal work behind him. Happily, he proved a false prophet in thinking his name writ in water, so a biographer can give the last word instead to Matthew Arnold: "He is—he is with Shakespeare."

Biographers of Keats all reverse the manifest tendency of the autobiographical texts on which they so depend, citing these spirited but often tormented letters according to a narrative of development, achievement, and vindication that would have surprised the hapless poet. It is to the credit of Andrew Motion, poet and author of an award-winning biography of Philip Larkin, that Keats's feelings of abject failure are well conveyed in his new biography. In the pages of this long book, one finds a short, unhappy life. But it's a notable irony that Motion's Keats comes to life only when he is dying—when this "Cockney suburban" poet has stopped writing poetry, has despaired of the "march of passion and endeavour" that had underwritten his politics, and has begun to sink into a "posthumous existence."

In *Keats,* Motion draws on the historicist research and criticism of the 1980s and 1990s. Though symptoms of this approach first presented in Renaissance studies, it's among Romantic scholars and critics that it has taken hold most stubbornly. The British Romantics from Blake and

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Coleridge to Shelley and Keats nurtured the very concepts the "new historicists" are most vigilant to unmask: self, originality, imagination, genius, essence, idealism, transcendence, universality. Motion ends his introduction with a bow to these endangered concepts—one wouldn't term him a strict historicist—but his principal revisionary intent is to anchor Keats in the politics of his times.

This anchoring is the book's *raison d'être.* Keats is the British Romantic poet already best served by biographers, especially Aileen Ward, Walter Jackson Bate, and Robert Gittings, whose celebrated biographies appeared in the 1960s. No major new archival material by or directly about Keats has surfaced since then, so a new diagonal through familiar material, plus some expanded contextualization, is needed to justify another reading of the life. Motion's biography doesn't fully answer to this expectation.

The main question is not whether Keats was a political animal: his earlier biographers, especially Ward, have noted his liberal-to-radical sympathies, and there are explicit political pronouncements in his letters. The question is the degree to which political consciousness and political allusion pervade the major poems. And here Motion comes up with little compelling evidence—surprising, given the magnitude of his inquiry. Politics remains in this biography a fascinating backdrop to a career focused on the work of the imagination, humanitarian and social but largely nonspecific in political reference.

One implacable agenda of historicist critics has been to uncover a political consciousness in literary texts seemingly devoid of any. More than a dozen critics since the mid-1980s have weighed in on Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," the key text in the historicist debate. It has been read as Wordsworth's attempt to evade authorial guilt at his own political apostasy. What is the evidence? Well, there *is* no internal evidence, and this becomes the evidence. Wordsworth tells us that the poem was written on July 13, 1798. He doesn't mention what historicist critics insist "must have been" on his mind—that this is the eve of the ninth anniversary of Bastille Day. (Maybe he even backdated his poem by a day to throw us off the track, speculates one critic.) Furthermore, the ruins of Tintern Abbey then provided shelter for homeless people of the sort a younger, radical Wordsworth had championed. That they are absent from the poem (albeit the full title is "Lines written a few miles *above* Tintern Abbey"), or have been sublimated into picturesque "vagrant dwellers" and a "hermit" tending a fire, supposedly bespeaks Wordsworth's attempt at historical evasion and an erasure of his earlier activism.

Motion adopts this agenda to the extent that he attempts to recover a politics not immediately evident in the major poetry, but the import is that Keats is a poet of political engagement, not of Wordsworthian evasion. The

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famous opening lines of *Endymion* mention "gloomy days" that a "thing of beauty" could dispel. Motion tells us that these lines have "a quite specific origin and aim": "In the early spring of 1817, [Leigh] Hunt had attacked the excesses of the restored Bourbon regime in France, and the support given to it by the British government." Also, there were bad harvests, "riots in manufacturing towns, an assault on the King's coach which led to the 'Gag Acts', [and] the trial and acquittal of William Hone."

None of this is in the language or narrative groundwork of the poetry, however, and one wonders if Keats's contemporaries would have had any more success than we in unpacking the complex reference of "gloomy days." *Endymion* does indeed have some political commentary, cited by Motion: "It will easily be seen what I think of the present Ministers by the beginning of the 3rd Book," said Keats to his friend Richard Woodhouse. But the passage seems anomalous in this apprenticeship poem, and more so in the major poetry to come.

Another exegetical stretch occurs in Motion's reading of Keats's late poem, "To Autumn," which he says "refers to the social anxieties which had dogged [Keats] all his adult life." Keats speaks of the "gleaner," and Motion notes that "gleaning had been made illegal in 1818, and although the figure is obviously part of an appeal to the world of Classical fulfilment, and a refracted expression of Keats's wish to glean his teeming brain, it also refers to his sympathy for the denied and the dispossessed." This kind of argument is found also in the historically learned, critically tenuous recent study by Nicholas Roe, *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent* (Oxford, 1997).

But most of Motion's readings do not treat the poems as cryptograms. Often he backs away from claiming direct political allusion. He shows how the erotic lushness of Keats's neo-paganism in *Endymion* and *The Eve of St. Agnes* has a political implication as an affront to the conservative tastes of John Lockhart and John Wilson Croker, writing for *Blackwood's* and *Quarterly Review*. And where no direct political allusion is discernible, Motion often claims that Keats's poetry is "social" in its deep implication.

But I'd observe that "social" returns us to the remarkable figure we already know: the humanitarian poet who believed that writing poetry could be a continuation by other means of the medical career he had abandoned. The poet should be a physician to humankind. The social or ethical Keats is in no way covert: the letters and poetry engage issues of pleasure, happiness, identity, desire, suffering, injustice, force of circumstance, egoism, sympathy, disinterestedness, and social responsibility. No arcane hermeneutics is required to recover this aspect of Keats—it's all there on view.

Drawing on recent studies of Keats's early schooling at Enfield and his apprenticeship as apothecary surgeon, Motion writes in rich and valuable detail of the liberal institutions where Keats is presumed, reasonably,

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to have imbibed his cultural and political values. (Roe's book can be profitably consulted as well on such matters.) "Is presumed," because we have not much more than a handful of anecdotes to give us the Keats of these "lost years" before the letters kick in. And, significantly, Keats didn't say much about his own earlier life, unlike Coleridge, who wrote a series of autobiographical letters to his friend Thomas Poole.

Here and elsewhere, Motion uncovers Keats's politics by investigating the company he kept. This is politics by association. For instance, Sir Astley Cooper, the senior surgeon at Guy's Hospital where Keats received the distinction of being named a "dresser," had earlier been an outspoken militant radical. As a surgeon and instructor, Cooper practiced "radicalism by other means"—through enlightened care of patients and through the value he placed on physical observation free of conjecture. This must have rubbed off on Keats. But there's counter-evidence as well: a contemporary would later say that Keats was off in a dream world scribbling verse during Cooper's lectures. We know he took indifferent notes. Moreover, Keats wasn't dresser to Cooper but to William Lucas, Jr., a "cack-handed butcher," in Motion's phrase. And Cooper had agreed, in any event, to be politically muzzled as a condition of his appointment at the hospital. So how much political consciousness would a dreamy Keats have derived from an erstwhile radical delivering lectures on surgery? It's a matter of conjecture.

Motion's biography is grounded in a large sympathy with this poet. He has written movingly about Keats elsewhere. In "Sailing to Italy" (from *Salt Water,* Faber & Faber, 1997), an autobiographical piece mingling prose and poetry, he narrates a voyage he made to Italy in the wake of the doomed poet. But more so than in some previous biographies, here Keats tends to fade into his contexts and associates.

The biography may illustrate the perils of wishful reading. We *wish* our poet to have such and such a politics (for which there's good evidence), and we *wish* him to channel this politics into his major verse (for which there's only conjectural evidence). We *wish* to set right the Victorian and modernist misreading of Keats as disengaged aesthete.

Motion admits of a disjunction between political and poetical discourses: Leigh Hunt himself could write non-political poetry. Motion doesn't attempt a political reading of "La Belle Dame sans Merci," in which Keats attempts to escape "the identity-sapping powers of love." The biography makes clear that it was a *defeat* for a strapped Keats to consider writing journalism "on the liberal side of the question for whoever will pay me." He also told Shelley to "curb [his] magnanimity" (his ethico-political convictions) and be more of a poet. He could, like Leigh Hunt, maintain a problematic friendship with the painter Benjamin Haydon, an arch-conservative.

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We can safely assume that a radical politics enlarges, silently and indirectly, the humanitarian dimension of Keats's poetry. But this biography inadvertently reinforces one's feeling that Keats, in his pained, visionary world of nightingales, lamias, and urns, kept his politics largely out of sight.

LARRY LOCKRIDGE

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LETTERS

To the Editors:

I just received my first issue of *Partisan Review,* having subscribed after reading excellent philosophical pieces by Susan Haack. How disappointing, then, to read a book review of Thomas Nagel's *The Last Word* that falls so far short of the clarity, eloquence, and learning I expected. If we examine the second paragraph of the piece, we quickly see the stylistic, conceptual, and historical problems in Jenny Teichman's discussion. Here are the sentences one by one, with commentary.

"Although relativism is very ancient it can be interesting and useful to locate the cause of its repeated re-emergences." First, a grammatical gaff. The syntax of the phrase makes "it" a pronoun of "relativism." But Teichman employs "it" as the subject of the impersonal verb "is," without reference to an agent (as grammarians would say). Second, an argumentative problem. Teichman promises to "locate the cause" of relativism's persistence, yet Teichman offers nothing but a "remark" on the appeal of incoherent ideas. Third, "repeated re-emergences" is a redundancy.

"Nagel quotes Hilary Putnam's remark about 'the appeal which all incoherent ideas seem to have,' but makes no attempt to explain either their origins or their appeal." Again, a grammatical error. The subject of the sentence is "remark," but Teichman's use of the pronoun "their" makes "incoherent ideas" into the subject.

"If we look around, though, we can sometimes locate the (re-)emergence of relativism in the teachings of individual philosophers—Protagoras, for example, or Nietzsche, or, in Oxford, J. L. Mackie, author of *Inventing Right and Wrong*." Numerous problems here, not to mention the hack transition "If we look around, though." First, again, a grammatical one. Teichman cites the object "teachings of individual philosophers," but when giving examples, she cites the philosophers themselves. Second, the diacritical "(re-)" seems unnecessarily cute. Third, simply noting a leading relativist philosopher does not "locate the causes" of relativism or explain why that philosopher's relativism gained such prominence.

"Relativism speaks of hidden agendas, so Freud too has had a finger in this pie." A banal metaphor. Also, the reference to "hidden agendas" makes little sense here. The relativisms mentioned earlier (Protagoras, Nietzsche) ground relativism in ontology, not in "agendas," which sounds more like Foucault than philosophical relativism.

"Roger Kimball, in *Tenured Radicals,* argues that the popularity in America of global relativism can be traced to the arrival in 1947 of Paul de Man, a Nazi collaborator with plenty to hide." Here we have strayed pretty far from Nagel's book, and why Roger Kimball should be the direction is a puzzle. Kimball is a sharp-witted, entertaining critic, but he hardly counts (or would count himself) as an expert on relativism and related philosophical matters. Through Kimball,

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Teichman makes a series of historical observations—all of them alarmingly wrong. De Man was not a Nazi collaborator. De Man wrote literary reviews for a collaborationist periodical in 1940, three of which contained anti-Semitism. To call his submissions Nazi collaboration is to blur historical distinctions between people who passively continued their business under occupation and those who actively assisted in Nazi endeavors. To say that de Man had "plenty to hide" is to make him sound like the latter, instead of like a misguided or cowardly twenty-year-old caught up in fascist ideas of European culture, like hundreds of other intellectuals at that time. Finally, to attribute *any* influence to de Man when he arrived in the U.S. in 1947 is absurd. Although he flirted with New York literary circles in the fifties, de Man was largely unknown in intellectual and academic groups until the mid-sixties. He was a Harvard graduate student until 1960 and did not begin publishing his influential essays until 1966.

"The notion that objective knowledge is impossible everywhere (and especially in ethics) was consciously or unconsciously adopted by de Man as a smokescreen for his early life as an anti-Semite, a smokescreen enthusiastically taken up by his supporters in the U. S. and France." This assertion is silly. It makes de Man into a major epistemologist who had votaries here and abroad who cooperated in the cover-up. But the only people who took de Man seriously as an epistemologist—that is, as a thinker about knowledge, truth, and objectivity—were his own comparative literature students at Yale and other philosophical dilettantes. For any serious thinker, de Man's occasional statements about cognition and interpretation amounted to watered-down Nietzsche, interpreted through Heidegger.

Besides, de Man never said that objective knowledge is "impossible everywhere." He was too cagy to commit himself to an assertion so crass as that one, or to say anything about relativism. Instead, de Man talked about interpretation, and the distortions that language inevitably submits interpretation to. That proposition may be just as untenable as the former, but it does refine de Man's ideas, makes them more than just crude negations of objectivity. It also points to the only significant line of thought de Man pursued, that of a theory of figurative language—a theory that has absolutely nothing to do with his fascist youth.

To call all of this a "smokescreen" for his *Le Soir* labors, then, is wrongheaded. If de Man wanted to hide his past, he could have found easier ways than concocting a philosophy of relativism. In any case, the philosophy was not his. All of de Man's epistemological ideas were derivative, and many of the people he derived them from had nothing to do with European fascism (Derrida is an Algerian Jew born in 1930). People in the States who embraced them embraced Nietzsche, Heidegger, Freud, Lacan, and Derrida as well. This wasn't de Man's smokescreen—it was German phenomenology and French poststructuralism. (Who Teichman has in mind when she refers to de Man's French supporters is beyond me.)

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"The smokescreen worked, and works, like a charm." Is this mixed metaphor intentional?

This is not intended as a defense of Paul de Man. De Man had no claim to be a serious philosopher, notwithstanding the irritating idolatries of his former students. In many places, his work deserves to be logically dismantled, or historically revised. But Teichman's brief indictment does neither, instead substituting basic misrepresentation for calm analysis. She compounds her faulty reasoning with grammatical blunders typical of an undergraduate composition, not a *Partisan Review* article. Thomas Nagel deserves better.

Mark Bauerlein
Emory University, Department of English

Jenny Teichman replies:

I am puzzled by Mr. Bauerlein's letter. Its tone is one of personal hostility, yet I do not recognize Bauerlein's name and as far as I know I have never met him, not even briefly. Perhaps I am not the real object of his hostility but only a surrogate.

Just as puzzling is the fact that although he has nothing whatsoever to say about my exposition of Professor Nagel's book, he ends his letter with the words "Nagel deserves better."

After making some rather strange remarks about grammar, Mr. Bauerlein concentrates on one single paragraph of my review, the paragraph which mentions Roger Kimball and Paul de Man.

To begin with, my critic insists that I have committed a grammatical "gaff." He says I use the pronouns *it* and *their* to refer to the "wrong" referents. However, he gives no reasons and cites no authorities. He seems to be relying on the mistaken idea that a pronoun may only refer to the main subject of the sentence in which it occurs. One can quickly show that the imagined restriction is simply a mistake, either by giving counter-examples, i.e., examples of correct English usage which don't conform to Mr. Bauerlein's idea, or by checking with an authority like *Fowler's English Usage.*

The following sentences are examples of correct English:

"Desdemona loved Othello even though *he* was old and ugly" [pronoun refers to direct object, not to subject].

"Othello wrongly believed that Desdemona loved Cassio though in fact *she* despised Cassio" [subject of embedded subject].

"Othello believed that Desdemona loved Cassio although in fact *they* had never met" [subject plus object of embedded sentence].

I do not have time or space to expound *Fowler's English Usage* on this point but it is clear that Mr. Bauerlein's ideas would not be accepted by that authority. Interested readers can check *Fowler* for themselves, of course.

Mr. Bauerlein's ideas about pronouns are certainly mistaken and to make matters worse he goes on to confuse *pronouns* with *exemplification.* Thus he complains about the phrase "the teaching of philosophers, for example Protagoras, Nietzsche. . ." for much the same reason why he complains about my use of pronouns; he thinks that in giving examples I should not have mentioned philosophers

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(presumably because the word "philosophers" is only part of the subject term) but rather the teachings of philosophers (presumably because "the teachings of philosophers" is the complete subject term). I'm afraid Mr. Bauerlein's objection here is fanciful in the extreme.

Let us now turn to Paul de Man and Roger Kimball. Bauerlein defends de Man against the charge of collaboration by blurring the difference between "passively going about [one's] business" (as it might be, baking bread or cleaning the streets) and agreeing to write anti-Semitic articles for Nazi newspapers. Or does he mean that writing anti-Semitic articles was de Man's ordinary work *before* the Nazis appeared on the scene? (What kind of excuse is that?) Mr. Bauerlein then adds "This is not intended as a defense of de Man," thereby adding implicit self-contradiction to blurring and confusion. At this point I can't help wondering whether his description of certain students of comparative literature as "philosophical dilettantes" might not apply to Mr. Bauerlein himself.

Mr. Bauerlein writes: "Roger Kimball hardly counts as an expert on relativism and related philosophical matters." But why not? Is it to be supposed that because Mr. Kimball isn't a professor he can't possibly be an expert on any academic subject? That is a simple-minded view. Not all college professors are first-rate scholars and not all first-rate scholars are college professors. Mr. Kimball is an original thinker and an unusually learned man, facts which are evidenced in his writings, for example, his essays on Heidegger, Sartre, Bertrand Russell, Derrida, and J. S. Mill. Moreover, some of his best (and wittiest) papers are directly concerned with the origins and effects of moral relativism. It is my opinion that the undergraduates at Emory would benefit if they could be encouraged to study Roger Kimball's essays. In fact, I'd like to recommend that their existing syllabuses be pruned to make room for that option.

My critic's letter ends, as it begins, with a barrage of insults. Just before the final barrage he writes as follows: "Who Teichman has in mind when she refers to de Man's French supporters is beyond me." I believe that this comment proves that Mr. Bauerlein doesn't know anything about French laws relating to citizenship and might not even know that Algeria used to be a colony of France. Although Jacques Derrida, a supporter of de Man, was indeed born in Algeria, he is nevertheless a citizen of France—unless he has actually given up his French citizenship!

Jenny Teichman
New Hall College, University of Cambridge

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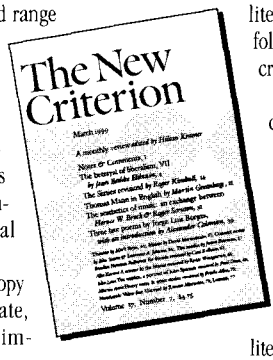

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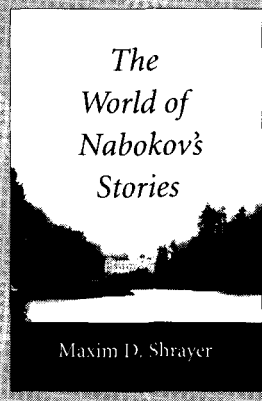

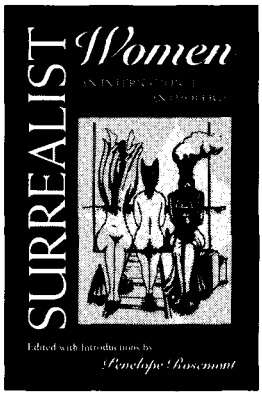

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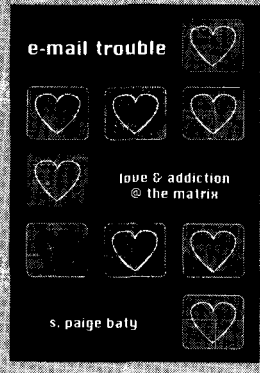

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$500 first prize and publication in *Witness* awarded to the winning story by a writer who has not yet published a book of fiction, poetry or creative nonfiction with a nationally distributed press. (Other entries will be considered for publication and payment at our regular rates.)

Complete Rules and Guidelines

1 All entries must be postmarked by December 31, 1999. Mail to *Witness* Emerging Writers Contest, 27055 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills, Michigan 48334. Simultaneous submissions are allowed. Entries will be judged by the editors of *Witness*.

2 Entry fee is $15 per story, limit two stories per author ($30). Entry fee includes a one-year subscription to *Witness* (a $15 value). Make checks payable to *Witness*.

3 Previously published work or work accepted for publication is ineligible.

4 Maximum length is 1,500 words, typed, double-spaced. Author's name, address, phone number, title of story and "*Witness* Emerging Writers Contest" should be on page one of the entry.

5 No manuscripts will be returned. Please include a self-addressed, stamped postcard if you wish to have receipt of your entry acknowledged.

6 The winning story will be published in the next general issue of *Witness*.

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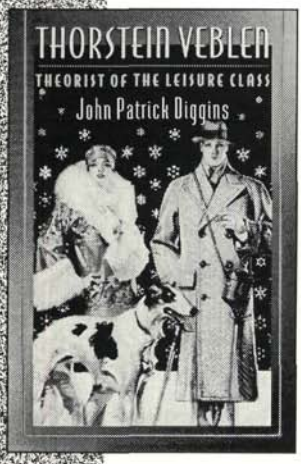

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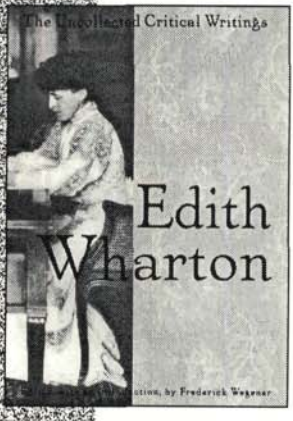

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